

## First Informal Briefing on the Global Refugee Forum

Palais des Nations, Geneva – 19 February 2020

### Summary of discussions

#### Introduction

The Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018, called on the High Commissioner for Refugees, in consultation with States and other stakeholders, to convene a periodic Global Refugee Forum for all United Nations Member States, together with relevant stakeholders, to announce concrete pledges and contributions towards the objectives of the Global Compact.<sup>1</sup>

The first Forum took place on 17 and 18 December 2019, with a day of spotlight sessions and special events on 16 December. More than 3,000 people participated, representing a truly whole-of-society engagement, including States, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, cities, academia, and refugees themselves. This broad participation and the richness and diversity of ideas that emerged led to promising results. At the time of the first informal briefing, the international community has committed over 1,000 pledges, and shared more than 400 examples of good practices showing how the Global Compact is already making a difference in the lives of refugees.<sup>1</sup>

Two months after the Forum, the Office convened on 19 February 2020 the first in a series of informal quarterly briefings to discuss the follow-up to the event. The briefing was opened by the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection and the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations and included presentations from the Director of the Global Refugee Forum and the Head of the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team. It focused on the Global Compact on Refugees and UNHCR operations, the outcomes of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, and next steps.

Almost 90 States, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, together with experts and refugees, were represented at the informal briefing.

This summary does not necessarily represent the views of individual participants or UNHCR, but it reflects broadly the themes and understandings emerging from the discussion.

#### Briefing

The presentation by UNHCR, including on the main outcomes of the Forum and the next steps, were well received and a PowerPoint presentation is available [online](#).

#### **Opening remarks**

*Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection*

- Recalled the purpose of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), which was to give effect to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).
- Recalled the history of the GCR, grounded in the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants.
- Noted that the GCR has achieved a genuine advance in that States have accepted the fundamental principle of equitable burden and responsibility-sharing for refugees, and in increasing the political will to broaden the base for refugee protection.
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<sup>1</sup> See the Global Compact on Refugees Digital Platform, at <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/home>, for a full list of the pledges and good practices submitted in the context of the Global Refugee Forum.

- Outlined UNHCR's catalytic role in supporting the implementation of the GCR through the GRF, to be held every four years with regular reporting to the UN General Assembly on progress on meeting the indicators for successful implementation.
- Described the first GRF as effective in facilitating a whole-of-society approach at the national, regional, and international levels, bringing together States, international organizations, the business community and the private sector, civil society, cities, faith-based groups, scholars, parliamentarians and – crucially – refugees.
- Noted that the confirmation of real success depends on how the international community gives practical and concrete effect to the pledges made at the GRF.
- Called on the international community to build on the momentum generated by the GRF, in order to turn the commitments into reality.
- Noted some of the main themes that emerged from the pledges, including education, the development of protection capacities, the role of the private sector, and jobs and livelihoods.
- Briefed on some of the GCR initiatives and the progress made against the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, the Asylum Capacity Support Group, the Global Academic Inter-Disciplinary Network, and the Indicators Framework.
- Underlined the legal standards of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its well-recognized obligations, which provide the legal foundation for the work of the international community on the GCR and the GRF.

### ***The Global Compact on Refugees and UNHCR operations***

*Mr. Raouf Mazou, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations*

- Noted improvements since the adoption of the New York Declaration, the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the affirmation of the GCR, in particular the understanding of how refugees should be protected and assisted.
- Noted a shift in developing countries, which host the majority of refugees and forcibly displaced, away from a response primarily based on camps towards one focused on inclusion.
- Recognized that Governments have been at the center of this change.
- Recognized the key role of international financial institutions whose new instruments provided refugees and host communities with a different type of assistance.
- Noted the inclusion of refugees in the national health and education systems of a number of host countries.
- Noted the shift within the UN system of perceiving refugees purely from a humanitarian point of view to seeing them as part of the development of their host countries and encouraging their inclusion in national development plans.
- Described the GRF as amplifying this new approach and of bringing together a range of partners – both traditional and non-traditional – in pursuit of the common objective of finding better responses and solutions to the plight of refugees.
- Noted the important role of traditional partners – NGOs, faith-based organizations, refugee-led organizations – in preparing for the GRF.
- Noted the evolving role of the private sector, from one of strictly a donor to now including contributing technology, new business models, expertise and investment in refugee businesses.
- Remarked that 50 per cent of total pledges came from new actors.
- Stressed the urgent need to match pledges – e.g. inclusive policies with financial support.
- Noted the importance of measuring progress to demonstrate that this new approach will result in better protection for refugees, and outlined plans to provide a first report back on the indicators at the 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting.
- Cited Ethiopia and Uganda as examples of strong government-led coordination mechanisms that go beyond the usual line ministries UNHCR works with, in a true whole-of-Government approach.
- Briefed on the launch of the three Support Platforms at the GRF (MIRPS, IGAD, SSAR).

- Outlined how UNHCR's regionalization and decentralization process would provide better oversight and support to operations in the region and would help the organization implement a regional approach to refugee situations (including the Support Platforms) and support the implementation of the pledges.

### **Outcomes of the 2019 Global Refugee Forum**

*Mr. Daniel Endres, Director of the Global Refugee Forum*

- Outlined the initial results of the GRF in terms of participation, high-level outcomes and pledges.
- Highlighted the key role played by refugees through the GRF process, including the preparatory work, and the new phase of engagement by the private sector.
- Briefed on the outcomes, including more than 1,000 pledges and 400 good practices.
  - o 3 Support Platforms (IGAD, SSAR, MIRPS)
  - o 6 new arrangements (3-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, Asylum Capacity Support Group, Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network, Digital Platform for the GCR, Indicators Framework for the GCR and the process for measuring the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees)
  - o 100+ in support of inclusive national policies
  - o 140+ on access to quality education
  - o 100+ on jobs and livelihoods, including 15,000 job opportunities
  - o 40+ on green energy and conservation, including 30 entities signing up to the Clean Energy Challenge
  - o 160+ on solutions (including 100+ on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways)
  - o Protection pledges, including for asylum capacity, AGD, and 125,000 hours of pro bono legal services
  - o Pledges towards WASH and health
  - o 250+ pledges contained a financial commitment
  - o \$2.2 billion for IDA 19 refugee window (World Bank)
  - o \$2.5 billion to boost private sector and create jobs in countries affected by FCV (World Bank)
  - o \$1 billion financing (Inter-American Development Bank)
  - o \$2 billion from States and other actors
  - o \$250 million from the Private Sector
  - o OECD INCAF Common Position on Financing for Refugee Situations
- Outlined the trends of the commitments, both at global and regional level (see [PPT](#))
- Listed some of the remaining challenges, including broadening and deepening the base of Member States engaged in refugee response; guaranteeing the non-politicization of the Triple Nexus and the need to find solutions that enable the United Nations to find an impartial way forward; the need to translate the soft pledges made at the GRF into concrete action; and the need for more opportunities for resettlement and complementary pathways.

### **Follow-up on the Global Refugee Forum and next steps**

*Ms. Perveen Ali, Head of the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team*

- Outlined the first step in the follow-up to the pledges:
  - o Updating the pledge tracking dashboard, which has undergone improvements (possible to filter and find pledges by entities, thematic areas of focus, region, etc.; and to the full text of the pledge).
- Described the ongoing analysis of pledges:
  - o Summary of the outcomes and trends under development, to be finalized by the end of March and to be made available online.
  - o Identification of areas in need of targeted support, i.e. those pledges that will require more support from all of the stakeholders involved to ensure implementation.

- Identification of gaps across geographical locations, areas of focus, stakeholder group, to focus efforts with a view to preparing for the next GRF and the development of future pledges.
- Described the follow-up mechanisms to be developed in partnership with stakeholders:
  - Developing systems with States and others for follow-up at country, regional and global levels.
  - Organizing stocktaking events at country, regional and global levels, involving all stakeholders, to review the pledges that were made by actors in that region, to identify where support is needed, gaps, etc. A stocktaking event is planned in Southern Africa and another is envisioned for the East and Horn of Africa.
  - Systematizing refugee engagement in UNHCR's processes, in the stocktaking, in the implementation, in the reporting, in the preparatory processes including at Geneva level.
  - Consulting with all co-conveners and co-sponsors to think about future engagement of these groups. e.g.: the Education group has already decided to continue as an Education Alliance to implement the strategy; many co-sponsors engaged in the Protection Capacity group are involved in the Asylum Capacity Support Group; some members of the Solutions group are also part of the ATCR's Core Group and will help take forward the Three-Year Strategy; and many Energy and Infrastructure co-sponsors are now participating in the Clean Energy Challenge Action Group.
  - Looking at opportunities to cultivate new pledges for the next GRF, to address some of the existing gaps, build on the pledges that were made, etc.
- Noted that UNHCR will identify and determine how best to report on progress, including through an online tool connected to the dashboard to see whether a pledge is in progress or complete, and through both new and existing processes for reporting to maintain momentum throughout the year and not miss on opportunities to report, problem-solve, and take things forward. This will include taking advantage of existing events, regular informal briefings (quarterly basis), ExCom and Standing Committee meetings, and the High-Level Official Meeting.
- Noted that a global progress report on the implementation of pledges will be issued.
- Noted that financial commitments will be tracked by other existing mechanisms.
- Noted that UNHCR will also facilitate the development of the report on the GCR indicators, with the first report to be issued at the 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting, drawing on data from a number of sources (UNHCR, OECD, UNESCO, ILO, World Bank, etc.).
- Noted further development of the Digital Platform for the GCR, with a view to making it a one-stop shop for information on the GCR, sharing good practices and informing the development of future pledges.

## General discussions

The Forum was generally recognized as a significant milestone in advancing the objectives of the Global Compact, with a particular emphasis placed on the broad engagement of partners.

It was underlined by all of the participants who took the floor that the success of the Forum resided in urgently translating the pledges and commitments into concrete action, with tangible benefits for refugees and hosts communities. The commitment and interest on the part of the international community to collectively take their pledges forward was unequivocal.

Participants who took the floor noted the following:

- the INCAF framework will help focus on how to bring long-term development support to host countries.
- the importance of a whole-of-society approach, including the role of cities.

- the necessity of highlighting matching opportunities in the analysis process
- the number and level of attendance as well as breadth and diversity of participants, in particular refugees, and the high number of concrete pledges made at the GRF
- the pledges by non-traditional partners – e.g. the World Bank, the Inter-American Development and the private sector
- tracking and monitoring the pledges through the dashboard should be kept light
- the need for UNHCR to have a conversation with ICRC in order to avoid scheduling conflict.
- whether specific pledges were made towards the Support Platforms
- the need for additional information on how best to engage in the ACSG
- the importance of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus
- the need to conceptualize the 2021 mid-term review to maintain momentum, build accountability, and expand support
- the engagement by the private sector and substantial contributions of development actors.
- the importance of strengthening the collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in response to refugee situations.

UNHCR responded as follows:

- This is a continuing process; pledges will continue to be made, and matching will continue.
- Persons with disabilities can be particularly affected by violence and forced displacement and are disproportionately affected as vulnerable people, and noted that UNHCR will take up the challenge to take greater note of their vulnerability and work with the UN Secretary-General on his initiative to consider, promote and protect their rights.
- UNHCR welcomed the positive momentum of the GRF and its follow-up, at the end of a very difficult decade.
- The stocktaking event in the East and Horn of Africa will take place in mid-March and promised to share more information on these events as it becomes available.
- The stocktaking events are a key mechanism to include refugees systematically in the stocktaking, reporting and follow-up, to look at opportunities to match policy change pledges with financial and financial support, to bring together the States and other actors that made pledges in the region as well as donors that made global pledges.
- Detailed guidance on the modalities for the ACSG is under development, as are plans to create a Secretariat, and recommended contacting DIP, which is spearheading this effort.
- UNHCR is currently going through a lessons learned exercise to think about how to improve the planning for the next Forum, as well as the 2021 High-Level Officials meeting, which will be the opportunity to launch the first report on the progress towards the indicators and the implementation of the pledges.
- Matching and partnership is key, which will be done both at HQ level but also – crucially – at the capital level.
- All actors are encouraged to continue to reach out to broaden the base of support.
- The Education Alliance remains very committed and that there would be not just one dedicated event in 2020 on the topic of refugee education.
- The pledges mentioned during the informal briefing are welcome.
- There is already some strong State support committed the Support Platforms.

## I. Follow-up

UNHCR continues to welcome feedback on the follow-up of the Global Refugee Forum. This can be sent to the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team at [hqgrf@unhcr.org](mailto:hqgrf@unhcr.org).

The next informal briefing will take place in the next quarter in advance of the June Standing Committee, with details to be shared in due course.