

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
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**NGO Statement on
Agenda Item 4 – General Debate**

Thank you, Chair.

This statement was drafted in consultation with NGOs and attempts to reflect a diversity of views.

Fifty years ago, the 1967 Protocol entered into force. It globalized the refugee protection regime by removing restrictions contained in the 1951 Convention. We are now engaged in efforts based on the New York Declaration, which recognized that the provision of protection and durable solutions for refugees is a global public good and collective responsibility. We all have a role in developing comprehensive refugee responses based on more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing. We therefore commend UNHCR for organizing the ExCom Special Segment, highlighting the ‘whole-of-society’ approach, although NGO and refugee panelists could have also provided useful insights to this discussion.

NGOs are eager to go beyond ‘business as usual’ and actively participating in the CRRF roll-out at national and regional levels. Thus, in East Africa, NGOs have contributed to the IGAD regional process and produced constructive recommendations on priority areas for CRRF roadmaps and Secretariats in roll-out countries. In Central America, NGOs are planning various consultations to feed into the process and generate inputs for the Global Compact on Refugees. Further clarity on the structures being developed to apply the CRRF at all levels would help NGOs engage more efficiently. In regions where the CRRF is not yet rolled out, NGOs work to raise awareness and understanding of the process and contribute to the Global Compact.

NGOs can indeed provide their support for more effective CRRF work, but to fully leverage our capacities, it is essential to develop more efficient communication with all civil society actors. In this perspective, we can build on the *2017 UNHCR-NGO Partnership Survey*, which reports a continued trend of favorable assessments, with improvements in planning, partner selection and implementation. As UNHCR continues to create new partnerships and build upon existing relationships with NGOs, the result of this survey can help improve communication, efficiency and overall impact in service to refugees.

The survey also recognizes that more should be done to sustainably build local capacities, an important dimension for the CRRF, that goes beyond NGOs. We are keen to see better connection of grass root actors to the CRRF process for practical progress in implementing the ‘whole-of-society’ approach, engaging more effectively host communities and refugees. NGOs

commend UNHCR for its efforts since the June Annual Consultations to increase refugees' inclusion in the CRRF and Global Compact process. NGOs are willing to work alongside UNHCR and already making contributions to have refugee voices more meaningfully heard. We encourage you to consult the Annual Consultations' Report, which contains further recommendations for the CRRF application and the Global Compact.

NGOs strongly recommend that the centrally important element of responsibility-sharing for refugee protection be mainstreamed throughout the remaining Thematic Discussions on the Global Compact. We call on UNHCR to formulate in the Programme of Action, and Member States to support, a vision accompanied with a road map that can set a trajectory for substantive progress in this area. To do this, the Programme of Action should go beyond a juxtaposition of good practices and highlight programmatic elements such as standby arrangements likely to increase responsibility-sharing and the predictability of responses. The international community has been talking about responsibility-sharing for some time but the Refugee Compact must outline a concrete mechanism to put this into practice.

Moreover, responsibility-sharing should not be limited to financial support for countries of first asylum but also include measures to expand resettlement and complementary pathways. While countries of first asylum are important partners in refugee protection and need strong international support, developed countries' role cannot be limited to that of donors. In this perspective, NGOs would like to call on the current US Administration to reconsider its decision to set the 2018 annual refugee admissions ceiling at 45,000. This represents a drastic reduction and a depressing signal, inconsistent with the traditional U.S. leadership role in refugee resettlement. Now is the time to increase, not decrease, refugee resettlement worldwide. NGOs play an important role in resettlement, which should be acknowledged in the Programme of Action. NGOs are ready to support States that commit to resettle refugees.

NGOs will bring substantive contributions to the Thematic Discussions. Thus, elements from the Child Rights in the Global Compacts Recommendations should be highlighted, particularly alternatives to detention and a comprehensive approach to protecting the rights of young people. The issue of statelessness should also be included in the coming deliberations, recalling that the New York Declaration recognizes that statelessness can be a root cause of forced displacement, and that forced displacement, in turn, can lead to statelessness.

In addition, NGOs are also looking forward to engaging with UNHCR ahead of the High Commissioner's Dialogue 'stocktaking exercise' and to better understand how this exercise will link with UNHCR's Monitoring and Evaluation' of the CRRF. Further details on how UNHCR envisions the formal consultations process to unfold in 2018 would also be appreciated to ensure the effective collaboration of all stakeholders in the process. NGOs are eager to engage with an interactive process.

In conclusion, Ms. Chair, let's remember that in New York last year, Member States reaffirmed the importance of the international refugee regime and made important commitments. In our September Standing Committee Statement, NGOs commended the progress achieved so far in

the CRRF implementation and the legislative reforms underway in countries of East Africa and Central America. We are keen to see those changes resulting in a new reality where ‘care & maintenance’ and confinement strategies become the exception.

However, the geopolitical situation is a constant reminder that more needs to be done to ensure momentum is maintained to deliver on those commitments everywhere needs arise. The indiscriminate violence in Rakhine State, which has been described as ‘ethnic cleansing’ by OHCHR, has resulted in mass displacement of people fleeing to Bangladesh. This unfolding humanitarian catastrophe requires urgent action at the highest level. We need specific humanitarian and political attention, in line with the commitments made in the New York Declaration.

We should also make sure our collective focus on the Global Compact on Refugees does not leave anyone behind, including internally displaced persons.

Thank you.