

2019 Global Refugee Forum

Background Note for the First Preparatory Meeting

Introduction

One year after the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees, the Global Refugee Forum will be a critical opportunity to build momentum towards the implementation of the Compact and strengthen our collective response to refugee situations. The Forum is a unique occasion for States and others to come together and announce new measures that they will take to ease pressures on host countries, boost refugee self-reliance, and search for solutions from the outset.ⁱ This calls for both vision and ambition. It is hoped that governments and others will use the opportunity of the Forum to be concrete in their commitments to improve the lives of refugees and their host communities.

This note sets out the key areas of focus for the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019, which would guide the development of pledges and contributions, the sharing of good practices, and the mobilization of support through co-sponsorship arrangements.

Arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing

The Global Compact on Refugees sets out a number of arrangements that facilitate more equitable, sustained, and predictable contributions among States and other stakeholders, and that support the search for solutions, including, where appropriate, through assistance to countries of origin.

The first Global Refugee Forum presents an important opportunity for the international community to lay the foundations for the sustainable operation of these arrangements over the longer term, both at the global level and in relation to specific refugee situations, including through announcing pledges and contributions and sharing good practices in the following areas:

- Mobilizing **timely, predictable, and sustainable funding** for humanitarian and development responses to large refugee situations,ⁱⁱ such as through multi-year, un-earmarked funding, or the development or strengthening of financing mechanisms.
- Contributing to **global, regional, and sub-regional responses** to specific, large, and/or protracted refugee situations.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Preventing and addressing root causes**, such as through contributions to peacebuilding and human security.^{iv}

A system will also be developed to follow the implementation of pledges and contributions made at the Global Refugee Forums every four years, with a view to supporting the long-term operationalization of the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing.

Thematic areas of focus for the first Global Refugee Forum

The first Global Refugee Forum will also place an emphasis on the following thematic areas: **education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions, and protection capacity.**^v

While all contributions towards the implementation on the Global Compact are welcome, States and other stakeholders are encouraged to bear in mind both the arrangements for burden- and

responsibility-sharing and these five thematic areas of focus, in the formulation of pledges, both individually and collectively, and in the identification of good practices.

Education

Education is one of the most important ways to achieve solutions for refugee populations, especially in protracted situations. Education equips refugees with the academic and practical knowledge to live productive, fulfilling, and independent lives. It also enables them to develop the skills needed to contribute to the national economic development of the countries that host them. These skills are transferable, and, upon return, would be critical to the development of their own country. Education, coupled with economic inclusion, community development, and participation in peacebuilding, fosters the development of learners into productive members of society.

Access to education that is early, relevant to age and ability, and sustainable prepares displaced students to enter national education systems or smooths their transition into those systems. This can be achieved through joint commitment, action, and investment. Pledges and contributions and good practices could focus on more and better funding for education for refugees and host populations; programmes to increase access to education for girls; the creation of scholarship opportunities; efforts of host States to open educational systems to refugees; improvements to the quality of learning opportunities for host communities and refugees; and the recognition of qualifications that can serve as a springboard to university or higher vocational training.

Jobs and livelihoods

The economic inclusion of refugees has significant benefits to refugees and host communities alike. Access to livelihoods and jobs enables refugees to meet their needs for protection, food security, health, housing, and other essential services, in a safe, sustainable, and dignified manner. It also enables them to prepare for their future, whether they return home, integrate in their country of asylum, or resettle in a third country. Access to jobs and livelihoods further contributes to easing social and economic pressures on host communities through reducing poverty and decreasing expenses for national social security.

Development efforts and investments aimed at stimulating local economic growth, coupled with an enabling legal and policy framework, can facilitate diversified job and entrepreneurial opportunities and income sources for both refugees and nationals. They can also be targeted to increase livelihood opportunities for specific groups, such as women, who may be particularly vulnerable to protection risks associated with economic vulnerability. This is best achieved through a multi-stakeholder approach, built on pledges and contributions and good practices from States, international organizations and UN agencies, development actors, international financing institutions, the private sector, and other stakeholders.

Energy and infrastructure

Access to energy has significant humanitarian, developmental, and environmental benefits. It supports the reduction of the global carbon footprint and reduces competition for energy resources between refugees and host communities. It increases safety for women and children by providing alternative fuel sources and reducing exposure to risk when gathering firewood. It supports health and safety by reducing the use of hazardous cooking and heating methods. It facilitates various forms of education, including online learning, and enhances productivity, entrepreneurship, and livelihoods. It can also reduce the costs of operations for humanitarian and development actors. Pledges and contributions and good practices would focus on enhancing the provision of clean, safe, renewable, affordable, and reliable access to energy for refugees and host communities for use in a wide range of applications, including cooking, lighting, communications, and water treatment.

Refugee influxes may also increase demand for services and place stress on infrastructure. In many countries, service providers face budget deficits, resource scarcity concerns, and growing infrastructure investment needs. Pledges and contributions and good practices would focus on relieving some of these pressures and promoting social cohesion. They could support building the self-reliance and resilience of refugees and host communities through increased access to effective water and sanitation services, health facilities, land that can be used for housing and production, and transport and road networks. They could also address environmental risks and health hazards caused by illegal dumping and burning of solid waste. They could further support connectivity for refugees through improved access to digital technologies.

Solutions

The achievement of durable solutions is one of the principal goals of the international refugee protection regime, and the Global Refugee Forum represents a unique opportunity to work towards this through increased international cooperation, solidarity, and support. Durable solutions may be found through the sustainable, safe, and dignified return of refugees to their countries of origin. They may also be secured through local integration, which permits refugees to acquire a durable legal status and access to national protection in the host country. Solutions may also be found through resettlement, which is both a tool for protecting the most vulnerable refugees and for sharing responsibilities with host countries; or through complementary pathways for admission to third countries, such as family reunification, labour mobility schemes, and scholarships.

Pledges and contributions and good practices related to solutions could focus on supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. They could support the implementation of the three-year strategy for resettlement and complementary pathways envisaged in the Global Compact, which will be elaborated further in advance of the Global Refugee Forum. They further could help to resolve protracted refugee situations or support States that facilitate access to local integration for refugees.

Protection capacity

Strengthened protection capacity enables national protection systems and institutions to manage and deliver public resources for refugees and host communities effectively. Efforts to do so are government-led and would be practical, predictable, and sustainable. They would be in line with national efforts to strengthen core government functions and institutional capacities and the national SDG 16 priorities, to the extent possible.

Pledges and contributions could include financial assistance or technical support to governments to strengthen their legislative institutions and development of laws sensitive to forced displacement. They could focus on enhancing institutional capacities for birth, civil status, and housing, land, and property registration, as well as documentation. They could further support government-led mechanisms, resource mobilization, and implementation for early warning and preparedness planning. They also could help to strengthen asylum systems, with the support of the Asylum Capacity Support Group, in the areas of admission/reception, registration, documentation, information management, and refugee status determination. In supporting government-led efforts to strengthen justice and security institutions, they could focus on efforts to prevent and combat sexual and gender-based violence, alternatives to detention, community-oriented policing, and access to justice. They could also support the identification and separation of fighters and combatants at border entry points, and programmes for protection and assistance to children formerly associated with armed groups.

Sharing of good practices

The arrangements for burden- and responsibility sharing and the thematic areas of focus set out above would also inform the identification and sharing of good practices. Sharing good practices is central to realizing progress towards the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. Many States and stakeholders are already engaged in making the Global Compact a reality in the lives of refugees and the communities that host them. The new approaches they are implementing are making a significant difference. They are ground-breaking and a demonstration of leadership and innovation. These approaches and practices can be models to build upon and for others to follow.

States and other stakeholders would be invited to share examples of good practices at the local, national, regional, or global level both in the lead-up to and at the Global Refugee Forum. Sharing good practices facilitates learning, supports evidence-based programming, and encourages the application of knowledge and experience to new and existing situations, particularly when these practices are:

- Based on the needs of refugee and host populations, their interests, and expectations, and grounded in the local, national, or regional contexts;
- Easy to learn, feasible to implement, and have the potential to be adapted, replicated, and/or broadened in scale;
- Developed and/or implemented with other stakeholders, including refugee and host populations; and
- Successfully adopted with a positive impact.

UNHCR country and regional offices are available to support States and other relevant stakeholders at any stage in the process of identifying examples of good practices.

At this stage of preparations for the Global Refugee Forum, the digital portal for sharing good practices is under development. As an interim measure, good practices shared with UNHCR could be made available on the Global Refugee Forum website.

Further guidance on submitting examples of good practices, as well as a template and guidance on the development of pledges and contributions will be shared in April 2019.

Cross-cutting considerations

The following cross-cutting considerations would further inform and guide the development of pledges and contributions and the sharing of good practices in the areas of focus set out above:

- The guiding principles of the Global Compact on Refugees;
- The objectives of the Global Compact, and the importance of pursuing them on an equal footing;
- The centrality of a participatory approach, involving refugees and host communities;
- Age, gender, and diversity considerations, and the meaningful engagement of persons with specific needs, including: girls and women; children, adolescents, and youth; persons belonging to minorities; survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, or trafficking in persons; older persons; and persons with disabilities;
- The value of a multi-stakeholder approach; and
- The centrality of data and evidence to effective policy-making.

Co-Sponsorship Arrangements for the Global Refugee Forum

The Global Compact on Refugees provides that the Global Refugee Forum ‘will be co-convened and co-hosted by one or more State(s) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’. These arrangements will be elaborated further in advance of the Second Preparatory Meeting for the Global Refugee Forum.

At the same time, a system of co-sponsorship is envisioned to facilitate the engagement of States and other stakeholders that wish to support specific topics in the lead-up to and at the Forum. Co-sponsorship could be linked to one of the arrangements for burden- and responsibility sharing, such as introducing or building upon a financing mechanism or convening a solidarity conference for a specific refugee situation. Co-sponsorship could also be linked to the thematic areas of focus for the first Forum or a particular element of them. For example, States or other stakeholders could co-sponsor the ‘solutions’ theme as a whole, or they could choose to focus more specifically on one element of solutions, such as resettlement.

Co-sponsors would act as advocates for and seek to mobilize pledges and contributions relating to the topic from a range of stakeholders. Co-sponsors would also lead by example, through high-level representation at the Forum, sharing good practices in their own responses to refugee situations, and/or through making pledges and contributions towards the objectives of the Global Compact.

States and other stakeholders wishing to co-sponsor a particular topic are invited to inform UNHCR at hqgrf@unhcr.org.

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ⁱ The objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees are to: i) ease pressures on host countries; ii) enhance refugee self-reliance; iii) expand access to third country solutions; and iv) support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

ⁱⁱ Global Compact on Refugees, para. 32.

ⁱⁱⁱ Global Compact on Refugees, Part III.A.

^{iv} Global Compact on Refugees, paras. 8-9.

^v These themes draw upon relevant provisions of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and Part III.B of the Global Compact.