2023 Global Refugee Forum

Concept Note

Comments are welcome

Please send any questions, comments or feedback on this concept note by completing this survey or sending a message to hqgcr@unhcr.org. This is a living document that will continuously be updated in the lead-up to the Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

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Introduction

This concept note sets out the proposed arrangements for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF), in line with the Roadmap to the GRF. It will be convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 13 to 15 December 2023 in Geneva with an advance day for side events on 12 December 2023.

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) aims to: (i) ease the 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.[1] It further sets out a series of arrangements to facilitate engagement and support for these objectives. Key among these arrangements is the Global Refugee Forum (GRF).[2]

The GRF is envisaged to facilitate the announcement of concrete pledges and contributions, and consider opportunities, challenges, and ways in which burden- and responsibility-sharing in support of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) can be enhanced. It is envisaged to take place in Geneva, Switzerland at the ministerial level and to include the participation of all United Nations Member States, together with relevant stakeholders. It is co-hosted and co-convened by one or more State(s) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with an invitation to the United Nations Secretary-General to participate.

The first GRF in 2019 garnered over 1,400 pledges and initiatives and 350 submissions of good practices linked to the GCR from more than 15 stakeholder groups.[3] In 2021, UNHCR released the first GCR Indicator Report and convened a High-Level Officials Meeting to take stock of progress towards the GCR objectives at the mid-point between Forums. Twenty key recommendations and follow-up actions were identified at the High-Level
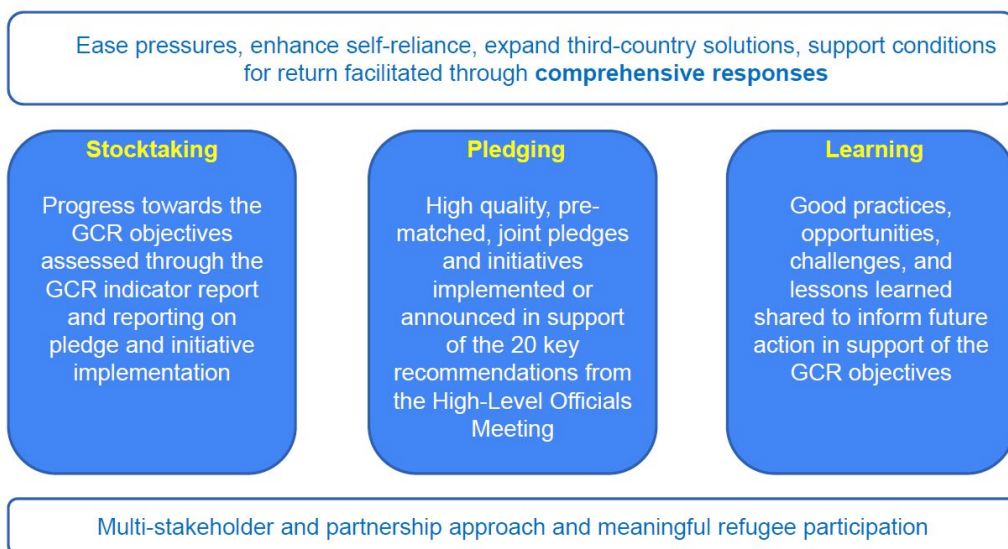
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[1] See GCR, para 7

[2] See GCR, paras 17-19.

[3] The stakeholder groups are comprised of governments, refugees and host community representatives, local authorities, cities and other local actors, international organizations within and outside the United Nations system, regional organizations, humanitarian and development actors, international and regional financial institutions, parliaments, civil society organizations, faith-based actors, the private sector, media, academics, and sport and cultural organizations (see GCR, sect. 3.2, para. 3).

Officials Meeting to guide the development of pledges and contributions for the next GRF in 2023 (see annex to this Note).

The 2023 GRF will provide an opportunity to build on and highlight the progress made by governments and other stakeholders towards the **implementation of pledges and initiatives announced since 2019**. It will also provide space for participants to **take stock** of progress, **announce new pledges**, and **share learning** to inform and inspire further burden- and responsibility-sharing and facilitate comprehensive responses.

Purpose of the Global Refugee Forum

Ease pressures, enhance self-reliance, expand third-country solutions, support conditions for return facilitated through **comprehensive responses**

Stocktaking	Pledging	Learning
Progress towards the GCR objectives assessed through the GCR indicator report and reporting on pledge and initiative implementation	High quality, pre-matched, joint pledges and initiatives implemented or announced in support of the 20 key recommendations from the High-Level Officials Meeting	Good practices, opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned shared to inform future action in support of the GCR objectives

Multi-stakeholder and partnership approach and meaningful refugee participation

Stocktaking

How should States and UNHCR provide data for the GCR indicator report?

The GCR calls on States to include refugees and host communities, as well as returnees and stateless persons as relevant, within national data and statistical systems (GCR, paras. 46). This **statistical inclusion** (e.g., in Census, living conditions surveys) is a prerequisite for measuring several GCR indicators and therefore the progress towards GCR objectives. It is also a key tool for effecting the pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no-one behind.

UNHCR is expected to support States (e.g., national statistical office) in operationalizing statistical inclusion.

Donors (States, multilateral organizations, private donors) are also encouraged to participate in international data collection relevant to GCR indicators (e.g., OECD data collection on development assistance to refugee situations).

How will pledge implementation be tracked?

Similar to the first GRF, a light online self-reporting mechanism will continue to track pledges made by pledging entities, with the reporting mechanism continuously open, and updates requested on a biannual basis. The results of these updates would appear on the pledges dashboard of the GCR Digital Platform, indicating whether a pledge is in the planning phase, in progress or fulfilled. Analysis of progress towards pledge implementation will also be shared through regular briefings convened by UNHCR on the GCR and the GRF as well as stocktaking for the 2025 High-Level Officials Meeting.

Pledging

Pledges announced since 2019 need to be implemented and **new pledges developed for the GRF in 2023** in line with the **key recommendations** from the 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting and the GCR principles and objectives. To further guide pledge development, UNHCR will facilitate, together with other stakeholders, including refugees, an assessment of the main priorities for pledging at the country, regional, and global levels within the framework of these recommendations and will provide regular global briefings to update all stakeholders on these priorities.

What constitutes a pledge?

Pledges towards the GCR objectives may include:

- **Financial,[4] material, and technical assistance;**

- **Resettlement places and complementary pathways** for admission to third countries; and

- **Other actions** that States have elected to take at the national level in support of the objectives of the global compact, such as making inclusive policy commitments,[5] joining or developing initiatives, or monitoring and research.

Pledges may be made either **jointly** by a group of stakeholders towards a common objective or **individually**. Where a joint pledge is envisioned, pledging entities are encouraged to do so through existing or new GCR initiatives or to reach out to UNHCR (hqgcr@unhcr.org) for guidance where needed.

A high-quality pledge is:

- ✓ **Additional,** providing new support, allocations of resources, or engagement to enhance burden and responsibility sharing. Current programmes and pledges demonstrating positive impact could be shared as either pledge updates on the pledges and contributions dashboard or as good practices on the GCR digital platform, and can be shared during the GRF.

- ✓ **Quantifiable**, providing, where possible, an implementation timeline, costs, beneficiary data, and details of support provided or needed for implementation of the pledge**,** to facilitate and demonstrate positive impact.

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[4] See for example the Global Compact on Refugees paragraph 32 on Funding and effective and efficient use of resources, including "efforts to expand the support base beyond traditional donors".
[5] See examples of policy commitments announced by major host countries and the common United Nations pledge.

- ✓ **Needs-driven**, aligning the pledge with the [key recommendations](#) and the GCR principles and objectives and, where possible, matched (financial, material, and technical support for the implementation of policy commitments made by host countries).

  A pledge matching portal to facilitate **matching of policy pledges made by host countries since 2019 with support** will be launched on the GCR Digital Platform in the fourth quarter of 2022. UNHCR is available to facilitate discussions with governments and other relevant stakeholders to secure matching in advance of the GRF.

When developing a pledge, where possible, stakeholders would:

- ✓ **Use the multi-stakeholder and partnership approach** set out in the GCR to enhance burden- and responsibility-sharing either through existing or new [initiatives](#) or through the development of new pledges. Multi-stakeholder pledges would ideally involve multiple stakeholders, including refugees, that would leverage their complementary strengths to support the implementation of current or new [host country policy pledges](#) and common priorities at the country, regional, or global level, in line with the [key recommendations](#).

- ✓ **Consult with refugees and affected communities, and consider age, gender, and other diversity[6] in the design, planning, and implementation of the pledge** to ensure effective responses that are appropriate, accessible, and inclusive.

How can stakeholders get involved in developing pledges?

Building upon lessons learned from the 2019 GRF co-sponsorship arrangements, multi-stakeholder engagement for the 2023 GRF will be advanced primarily through the [existing initiatives linked to the GCR.](#)[7] Where themes from the key recommendations are not currently addressed through existing initiatives, "groups of friends'' may be developed by UNHCR, together with partners, in support of pledge development around specific themes. Pledges also may be made outside of these initiatives and groups of friends.

Stakeholders that are not already engaged in initiatives are invited to indicate, through this short [online survey](#), the key areas around which they would like to work towards developing and implementing pledges. Upon receipt of the survey inputs, the UNHCR focal point overseeing the relevant area indicated will reach out to those who responded to discuss opportunities for developing pledges or joining initiatives at the country, regional, or global levels.

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[6] Please consult the [AGD Tip sheet](#) for further guidance.

[7] Examples of initiatives with links to the GCR include, but are not limited to the Asylum Capacity Support Group; Clean Energy Challenge; Connection Refugee Education Challenge; Education Alliance; Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network; Global Family Reunification Network; Global Taskforce on Third Country Education Pathways; the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) and GRSI States Network on Community Sponsorship; Global Taskforce on Refugee Labour Mobility; Group of Friends on the Charter for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action; IGAD Support Platform; Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts; Joint legal community pledge; Labour Mobility Taskforce; MIRPS Support Platform; Multi-Religious Council of Leaders; Multi-Stakeholder Coalition on Meaningful Refugee Participation; Poverty Alleviation Coalition; PROSPECTS Partnership; Refugee Environmental Protection Fund; Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative; Sports Coalition; SSAR Support Platform; Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways; Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative; UNHCR-IFC Joint Initiative; and the UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action on Refugee Children.

These initiatives/groups will be invited to develop GRF Roadmaps involving the relevant stakeholders, refugees and refugee-led organizations (RLOs), and members of cross-cutting initiatives where appropriate. The initiatives will act as a forum for developing joint pledges in line with the guidance on pledges set out above and can participate in the relevant briefings convened by UNHCR to share strategies, progress, and calls to action, as well as information about national, regional, and global priorities.

In addition, UNHCR has formed a reference group for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) comprised of NGO networks from around the world, as well as an Advisory Board comprised of global, regional, and local organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, which will serve as further consultative mechanisms for the preparations of the GRF and the development of pledges. NGOs, including RLOs, will have further opportunities to engage in consultations on pledge development through the regional NGO consultations. For further information, please contact HQGCR@unhcr.org.

How will pledges be recorded?

A multi-language pledge submission form will be developed in the third quarter of 2022 to ensure that pledges are aligned with the key elements of a high-quality pledge outlined above. Where pledges do not fully align with these elements, UNHCR will follow up with pledging entities to consider adjustments and determine the next steps. Pledges may be submitted at any time. Pledging entities are encouraged to share information about the pledges they are considering or working towards during the global briefings on the GRF in 2023 to facilitate matching in advance of the GRF and build momentum.

Learning

Sharing good practices

Good practices contribute to the objectives of the GCR and have the potential to be adapted, replicated, and broadened in scale. All stakeholders are invited to share good practices that translate the GCR into action at the local, national, regional and global levels. Through the sharing of good practices, stakeholders can learn from one another about what works well, what can be replicated in other situations, and what can be scaled up with further support. Sharing good practices can inspire others to develop innovative and impactful pledges and contributions that can be announced at the GRF.

> *Example: The **Graduation Approach** is a good practice created by BRAC, which has proven to alleviate extreme poverty. For a period of 18 to 36 months, participants in this programme receive step-by-step financial and professional support. At the 2019 GRF, the Poverty Alleviation Coalition pledged to end extreme poverty for 160,000 households in 26 countries by using the Graduation Approach. To date, some 62,000 households in more than 19 countries have benefitted from this pledge. Further support is needed to scale up the use of the Graduation Approach in order to the meet the stated goal by the GRF in 2023.*

To learn more about the criteria and how to share a good practice on the GCR Digital Platform, please visit the GCR good practices webpage. Good practices may be shared at any time by completing the online form or completing and sending the template for submission, along with any attachments, to hqgcr@unhcr.org.

After review by UNHCR, submissions meeting the criteria will be published in the good practice collection of the [GCR Digital Platform](#). Good practices may also be shared during briefings on the GCR and GRF preparations, through UNHCR communications channels, and at the GRF.

Stakeholders are encouraged to share their good practice submissions **as early as possible** in advance of the Global Refugee Forum to ensure they can inspire pledge and initiative development and are published in a timely manner. Any submissions received after 30 November 2023 may not be published until after the Forum.

Roadmap to the Global Refugee Forum

Who will be invited to participate in the GRF?

The 2023 GRF will be co-hosted by Switzerland and co-convened by Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, Niger, Uganda, together with UNHCR. The United Nations Secretary-General is also invited to participate. United Nations Member States and other stakeholder groups involved in the GCR as part of the multi-stakeholder and partnership approach will be invited to attend the GRF.[8]

All stakeholders are encouraged to involve refugees and refugee-led organizations in the design and development of pledges and initiatives and to include refugees as a part of their delegations. Further guidance on meaningful refugee participation in the Global Refugee Forum will be issued in Q4 2023.

How will the GRF be organized?

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[8] See GCR, sect. 3.2, para. 3, for a list of stakeholder groups.

UNHCR will organize four quarterly briefings in 2022. In 2023, UNHCR will convene three formal preparatory meetings and four informal quarterly briefings to consult and update on the GRF preparations.

A draft programme and modalities will be developed in consultation with governments and other stakeholders, including refugees.

In addition to the plenary, UNHCR will endeavour to provide further space for dialogue, showcasing high quality pledges, including matched pledges, and good practices through linked events, spotlight sessions, exhibits, and other modalities.

ANNEX: Summary of Key Recommendations from the 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting

Twenty key recommendations for the future were identified as a part of the stocktaking in the lead-up to and during the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM). Following is a summary of the recommendations and areas for action. It reflects inputs by States and other stakeholders during the regional, stakeholder, and thematic stocktaking events and processes, virtual preparatory roundtables, side and linked events, spotlight sessions, panels, the HLOM plenary discussion, and the GCR Indicator Report. For more detailed information in relation to these recommendations and action points, please see the Outcome Document for the HLOM.

Cross-cutting recommendations

Recommendation 1: Implement current GRF pledges and develop new ones to address identified gaps and needs.

- Concretise broad pledges that remain in progress.
- Adapt and innovate pledges where necessary to address changing needs.
- Match and align financial, material, and technical pledges with host country policy pledges.
- Report on progress made towards pledge implementation .
- Ensure that new pledges are needs-driven, quantifiable, additional, sustainable, inclusive, AGD-sensitive, and aligned with the GCR indicators.

Recommendation 2: Enhance access to international protection.

- Provide asylum and access to territory, which are key to responsibility sharing.
- Develop refugee and asylum laws, policies and systems that are in line with international standards.
- Provide expertise and resources to develop or strengthen national asylum systems.
- Ensure proper documentation for refugees, asylum-seekers, and returnees through dialogue and collaboration between countries of origin and countries of asylum.
- Strengthen and extend national child protection systems to include refugees.

Recommendation 3: Reduce statelessness.

- Develop and strengthen systems for the identification and protection of stateless persons.
- Provide financial support for statelessness-related programming.
- Increase efforts to reach the objective of the *#IBelong* Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024.
- Broaden the base of support to accelerate progress in addressing statelessness.
- Mainstream and integrate priorities to protect stateless people and prevent statelessness in the GCR process.
- Develop flexible new approaches and the use of technology by national governments and municipalities to ensure access to birth registration.

Recommendation 4: Make better use of combined humanitarian, development, and peace capacities to achieve the GCR objectives.

- Enhance cooperation and coordination between political, humanitarian, development, and peace actors.
- Strengthen coordination of humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding efforts and between local communities and governments.
- Improve reporting and analysis across engaged development actors.
- Ensure more predictable collaboration between humanitarian, development, and peace actors to bring integrated approaches to solutions.

Recommendation 5: Build attention to climate change into how we do business.

- Reframe our narrative to recognise and address climate change as a risk multiplier.
- Innovate to develop responses that enhance the resilience of refugees and their hosts to climate change.
- Provide funding for environmental protection, habitat restoration, land rehabilitation, and agroforestry.
- Invest in sustainable energy in refugee-hosting areas to promote access to electricity and connectivity.
- Engage displaced persons in community-led disaster prevention and preparedness and in identifying, designing, and supporting solutions.

Recommendation 6: Facilitate more systematic, inclusive, and meaningful refugee participation.

- Include refugees in GCR follow-up at all levels (local, regional, and global).
- Provide direct, flexible funding for refugee-led organisations (RLOs).
- Address barriers to refugee engagement, including through equal partnership approaches.
- Apply approaches to the reception and treatment of refugees that foster amicable and mutually beneficial relationships with host communities.
- Involve refugees in efforts to increase educational pathways and employment opportunities, freedom of movement, and access to documentation.
- Consider the specific needs, priorities, and capacities of different members of refugee populations through an age, gender, diversity approach to make interventions more effective.

Recommendation 7: Enhance the data available to support effective action and investment in refugee situations.

- Systematise national and international data collection on refugees.
- Strengthen and systematize tracking of refugee financing by all stakeholders.
- Continue and extend efforts to build the evidence base on financing for refugee situations, self-reliance of refugees and host communities, and solutions.
- Enhance synergies between modern and traditional data instruments to establish robust tracking mechanisms.
- Strengthen capacities and efforts towards data collection and analysis disaggregated by age, gender, and diversity.
- Facilitate collaboration between refugees and host communities, national statistical offices, civil society organisations, and UN partners in data collection efforts.
- Facilitate access of local authorities to social and economic data on the refugees they host.
- Facilitate participation of refugees in all relevant processes of data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
- Engage the private sector in generating evidence on economic inclusion of refugees.

Recommendation 8: Strengthen private sector engagement in support of GCR objectives.

- Engage across the spectrum of philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and shared value creation.
- Address policy, legal, and regulatory hurdles that constrain market-based private sector engagement in refugee-hosting areas.
- Further develop and replicate innovative financing schemes such as social impact bonds, bank guarantees, and entrepreneurial mechanisms.
- Strengthen the key enablers for piloting and scaling of promising initiatives with the private sector.
- Scale up cash-based interventions to catalyse private sector participation.
- Develop programmes and initiatives that include refugees and host communities as integral parts of their core businesses and value chains.
- Enhance cooperation between the private sector and humanitarian actors to advance refugee rights, self-reliance, inclusion, capacities, and third-country solutions.
- Develop socio-economic integration mechanisms that respond to local needs and create trust between the private sector and humanitarian actors.

GCR objective 1: Ease pressures on host countries

Recommendation 9: Intensify efforts towards more equitable burden and responsibility sharing.

- Broaden the base of support beyond the main refugee-hosting countries, donors, and institutions.
- Invest diplomatic and political capital to operationalise responsibility sharing across all refugee situations.
- Strengthen investment, cooperation, and political engagement through the Support Platforms.

Recommendation 10: Increase development financing in support of refugee situations.

- Expand cooperation with bilateral development actors and multilateral development banks.
- Ensure diversified and flexible financial instruments for short-term humanitarian and longer-term development efforts.
- Include refugees in national datasets, plans, and budgets.

- Identify and cost the extensions and improvements to national service delivery systems.
- Ensure that refugee-hosting localities are able to access financial support intended for them.
- Upscale financial and technical support for local authorities to include refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons in the provision of their services.

Recommendation 11: Provide more flexible, predictable, and multi-year funding for refugee responses.

- Scale up flexible, predictable, and multi-year development funding.
- Increase sustained and flexible financial support for organisations led by youth, women, refugees, and local actors.

GCR objective 2: Enhance refugee self-reliance

Recommendation 12: Increase social inclusion for refugees.

- Support refugee and host community youth to develop capacities and skills and maintain physical and emotional well-being.
- Scale up innovative approaches and strengthened partnerships to enhance socio-economic inclusion.
- Invest in capacitating local authorities and local civil society to support refugee integration, inclusion, and local solutions.
- Scale up initiatives that tackle racism and xenophobia.
- Realise the potential of sport to promote inclusion and protection.
- Engage and support universities to promote refugee self-reliance.
- Draw on local-level knowledge and expertise in refugee-hosting areas to inform national development plans.
- Ensure an age, gender, diversity (AGD) approach to refugee inclusion.

Recommendation 13: Increase economic inclusion and access to livelihoods.

- Provide refugees the legal right to employment.
- Increase job and livelihood opportunities (including access to land) to facilitate socio-economic inclusion.
- Provide targeted investments for inclusive national policies and approaches to jobs and livelihoods.
- Ensure that age, gender, diversity, and disability are focus areas for improvement.
- Enhance collaboration with local institutions that provide tailored and contextualised livelihoods programming.
- Take steps towards facilitating better access to services for economic inclusion
- Ensure that persons of concern are systematically included in all forms of social protection on par with nationals.
- Address barriers to accessing livelihoods and economic inclusion beyond labour law and economic activity.
- Build the evidence base to inform advocacy and support for economic inclusion.

Recommendation 14: Expand access to quality primary, secondary, and higher education.

- Invest in all stages of the education cycle.

- Explore and implement innovative approaches to learning, such as digitalisation and connected classrooms.
- Encourage meaningful participation and inclusion of refugees in education in the design, implementation, and review of education interventions.
- Conduct 'education equity audits' to inform governments' pandemic recovery planning and address inequities faced by refugee students and educators.

Recommendation 15: Provide refugees with healthcare through strengthened national systems.

- Include refugees in national health systems and policies.
- Systematically integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in humanitarian and development planning.
- Encourage a more refugee-inclusive response to health emergencies, including refugee access to testing, treatment, and vaccinations for COVID-19.
- Take steps to enable refugees to join the regular health workforce.
- Expand adaptations made to health services, such as switching to tele-medicine and remote case management.

GCR objective 3: Expand access to third-country solutions

Recommendation 16: Increase the volume of resettlement opportunities for refugees.

- Provide multi-year commitments and expansion of existing programmes for resettlement and family reunification.
- Broaden the base of countries providing resettlement opportunities.
- Ensure that complementary pathways remain additional to resettlement and family reunification.
- Expand multi-sectoral partnerships to facilitate, promote and advocate for third-country solutions.
- Encourage greater community sponsorship.

Recommendation 17: Build additional complementary pathways to third-country solutions.

- Expand education pathways in third countries.
- Provide pathways for displaced and host-community scholars to work in academia.
- Develop labour pathways through policy changes and private sector engagement.
- Contribute financial or in-kind support for actors who are developing admission pathways.
- Review and adjust legislation and policies that continue to pose barriers to refugees.
- Develop initiatives to reduce or cover the costs often incurred by refugees.
- Provide pro bono legal representation for refugees who face legal obstacles.
- Give greater priority to family reunification.
- Simplify the application process and provide additional assistance to support refugees to use it.
- Remove barriers to labour and education pathways.

GCR objective 4: Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity

Recommendation 18: Mobilise more resources in support of voluntary return.

- Provide increased financing for governments and other stakeholders to support and enable voluntary return.
- Use the 2023 GRF pledging process to demonstrate and mobilise increased commitments of resources in support of voluntary return.

Recommendation 19: Strengthen the planning and implementation of voluntary return.

- Ensure return planning is based on protection standards and principles.
- Plan and secure resources for reintegration measures early on.
- Ensure that returning refugees can safely access justice systems and legal support.
- Underpin voluntary return and reintegration with investments in national capacities and systems.
- Direct development investments into strengthening local economies and service provision systems.
- Apply programmes and approaches that enhance social cohesion, including area-based investments.

Recommendation 20: Improve cooperation to address root causes and build peace in countries of origin.

- Mobilise increased development and peace capacities to address root causes in countries of origin.
- Increase early investment in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.
- Strengthen the cooperation between political, humanitarian, development, peace, and financing actors.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue with communities to inform policy, planning, and programming.
- Strengthen and support the peacebuilding aspect of responses to refugee and returnee situations.

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