

## **Summary of the Fourth Quarterly Preparatory Meeting for the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review 2025**

*18 November 2025, 15:30–17:30 hours CET – Palais des Nations, Geneva*

The fourth and final quarterly preparatory meeting for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Progress Review 2025, took place on 18 November 2025. The meeting's central feature was the launch of the third Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) Indicator Report. It also included updates on pledge implementation, as well as on the programme and key logistical arrangements for the GRF Progress Review scheduled for 15-17 December.

### **Opening remarks by H.E. Ms. Anna Ifkovits, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office at Geneva**

Speaking on behalf of Switzerland as co-host of the upcoming GRF Progress Review, Ambassador Ifkovits emphasized that, with only weeks before the December meeting, it is crucial to ensure the event achieves its objectives: taking stock of progress in implementing the GCR and reinforcing collective action. She highlighted that direct support to host countries remains essential, noting that when national policies advance inclusion, partnerships across humanitarian, development, climate and peace sectors are strengthened, tangible results emerge in support of refugees and host communities. Ambassador Ifkovits stressed that the GRF Progress Review should facilitate this progress and pave the way for further advancements leading up to the next Global Refugee Forum in 2027. She underscored that meaningful refugee participation is now a core component of the GCR process: no longer symbolic, refugee voices, expertise, and experience are integral to Compact's legitimacy. Finally, she expressed deep appreciation for the continued commitment of all stakeholders, especially the Co-convenors, and for the resilience and leadership of refugees themselves, whose contributions should continue to guide collective efforts in the lead-up to the GRF Progress Review.

### **Opening Remarks by Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection**

Ms. Menikdiwela welcomed participants to the final preparatory meeting and expressed appreciation for stakeholders' sustained engagement, particularly in stocktaking and preparatory meetings, which exemplify the GCR's whole-of-society approach. She officially launched the [third GCR Indicator Report](#), noting that it was developed based on 16 indicators and nearly a decade of data (2016-2025) to track progress against the four objectives of the GCR. She recalled that this launch comes at a time of declining resources and limited political solutions, yet the GCR community continues to show strong commitment as reflected in 3,500 pledges and 47 multi-stakeholder pledges that are helping translate responsibility-sharing into measurable impact.

Ms. Menikdiwela summarized the key findings from the Indicator Report as follows: 1) Support to low- and middle-income host countries grew until 2023, then declined in 2024 and is projected to fall further in 2025, even as local and national partnerships continue to expand. 2) Refugee inclusion in national systems is steadily increasing through legal and policy reforms. 3) Resettlement peaked in 2024 before dropping sharply, while complementary pathways have continued to expand. 4) Returns are increasingly supported in safe and dignified conditions, though many still occur under challenging circumstances. 5) Persistent gaps in nationally

produced data hinder progress and risk deepening due to potential funding cuts. She further noted that overall funding is declining, responsibility-sharing remains unequal, and third-country solutions and support for return remain insufficient. Ms. Menikdiwela called for renewed political will, sustained financing, and stronger cooperation. She encouraged all stakeholders to use the Indicator Report to translate these findings into concrete action, reinforce their shared commitment and continue working together to advance the objectives of the Compact, including in the lead-up to the GRF Progress Review and the next Global Refugee Forum in 2027.

### **Presentation of the GCR Indicator Report 2025 by Ms. Grace Sanico Steffan, Senior Statistics and Data Analysis Officer, UNHCR**

Ms. Sanico Steffan provided a detailed presentation of the GCR Indicator Report that builds on the previous reports from 2021 and 2023 to track progress toward the concrete implementation of the Compact's four objectives. Drawing on data from UNHCR's Refugee Data Finder and partners such as OECD, OHCHR, and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), the latest report highlights several key trends and indicators. First, after 2022, the growth in global refugee numbers slowed, stabilizing at 36.6 million by mid-2025. This trend reflects three main factors: fewer people being granted refugee status or temporary protection; an increase in returns (including some occurring under non-sustainable conditions); a rise in resettlement in 2024 followed by a sharp decline in 2025. Over half of all refugees remain hosted by just ten countries (mostly low- and middle-income), and women and girls continue to face heightened risks, exacerbated by the sector's funding crisis.

On responsibility-sharing, data shows a modest increase in the share of global wealth represented by countries hosting 80% of refugees, though major disparities persist. In 2024, these host countries accounted for only 27% of global wealth. While high-income countries hosted 27% of refugees, partly due to the arrival of millions of Ukrainians, this remains low relative to their economic capacity. By contrast, low-income countries, holding only 0.6% of global wealth and 9% of the world's population, hosted 19% of all refugees. Countries such as Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda continue to receive disproportionately large refugee populations despite limited resources.

Under GCR Objective 1, Ms. Sanico Steffan emphasized that from 2020 to 2023, official development assistance (ODA) to refugee situations in low- and middle-income countries remained broadly stable but was still largely concentrated on short-term emergency response. She recalled that OECD projections indicate significant declines in overall aid in 2024 and 2025, which further constrain support to refugee situations. Under Objective 2 of the Compact, Ms. Sanico Steffan notes a gradual but uneven progress in refugee inclusion in national systems, with more legal reforms opening access to work and education for refugees. However, poverty, gender inequalities, and practical barriers to exercising these rights remain. On Objective 3, she noted recent advancements in both resettlement and complementary pathways but underscored available places remain far below global needs. Regarding Objective 4, she stressed that support for safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration continues to fall short of the rising number of returns.

Ms. Sanico Steffan underlined that progress across the Compact's four objectives remains fragile. The report concludes with a set of policy recommendations and concrete actions intended as a call to action for the GRF Progress Review, where a dedicated side event will provide the opportunity to discuss these findings.

## **Update on pledges and GRF Progress Review 2025 preparations, Mr. Nicolas Brass, Senior Policy Adviser and Head of the Global Compact on Refugees Section, UNHCR**

Mr. Brass thanked all stakeholders for their strong engagement in updating and implementing pledges, pointing to a recent outreach campaign. He informed that over the past 12 months, 1,900 individual updates were received, and 200 new pledges made. Of the nearly 3,500 cumulative pledges, approximately 63 per cent are either fulfilled or in progress, indicating that roughly a third have not yet been updated. He encouraged pledging entities to report progress where possible. Meaningful refugee participation is steadily improving, with over 60 per cent of recent updates including refugees in the design, planning, or implementation of pledges.

Mr. Brass confirmed that the GRF Progress Review in December will offer an opportunity to announce new pledges. Guidance has been shared to ensure new commitments are impactful, implementable, and aligned with host-country policy pledges and the multi-stakeholder pledge framework. Entities intending to pledge are asked to inform the GCR Section by the end of November 2025. Drawing on stocktaking findings, Mr. Brass highlighted that at least USD 2.6 billion has been disbursed since the GRF 2023 through fulfilled pledges. The pledging mechanism has proven effective in mobilizing partners, connecting supporters, and advancing implementation, though its full potential is yet to be realized. Progress toward the GCR objectives includes advances in economic inclusion and social protection, with around half a million refugees and hosts supported; an increase in refugee tertiary education enrolment from 6 per cent to 9 per cent between 2023 and 2025; continued expansion of complementary pathways, including 152,000 family reunification permits in 2023; and emerging good practices on conditions that support safe and dignified return, although this area remains challenging.

Challenges include the need to remove practical barriers to inclusion and addressing significant funding shortages, particularly for low- and middle-income host countries. Mr. Brass called for collective leadership to meet these challenges and maximize the impact of the upcoming GRF Progress Review. The December event will take place over the course of three days at the CIGC with a plenary session, spotlight sessions, pledge-announcements, side events and strategic dialogues. Furthermore, the ecosystem will feature exhibitions, a Speakers' Corner for people with lived experience, approximately 25 linked events and opportunities to network and exchange. A digital space will allow participants and non-participants to share contributions. The [programme](#) is available online and may be adjusted slightly as preparations continue.

## **Logistical updates on the GRF Progress Review 2025 by Ms. Anne Keah, Chief of Governance Section, UNHCR**

Ms. Keah provided a comprehensive overview of logistical arrangements for the GRF Progress Review. The CIGC will be reserved exclusively for the meeting, with plenary sessions held in rooms A–D. Participants are requested to submit delegation composition early to allow the Secretariat to finalize arrangements. All attendees, including those with UN badges, must register through the UN Indico system and will receive a digital badge to be scanned at the entrance. Security will follow standard UN procedures, and delegations are asked to limit the number of attendees given the CIGC's maximum capacity of 2,800 people. Seating in the plenary will follow the UN General Assembly model, beginning with Co-hosts and Co-convenors, followed by Member States in English alphabetical. Space will be limited: Co-convenors and Co-hosts will have four seats, other States two, and organisations one. Seating will also accommodate the range of stakeholder groups foreseen under the Global Compact on Refugees, including refugee-led organisations. There will be no formal speakers' list, and protocol will be applied flexibly to

ensure broad participation by both States and other stakeholders. Delegations wishing to speak should raise their nameplates, with priority given to Ministers and senior officials. Interventions should be concise and limited to three minutes. Side-events will run in parallel throughout the GRF Progress Review, with interpretation available in English and French unless otherwise specified. The plenary will be livestreamed. Bilateral rooms can be booked through the Governance Section. The Nansen Refugee Award Ceremony will be held on the evening of 16 December, with transport provided from CICG to Bâtiment des Forces Motrices. Additional logistical details will be available in the forthcoming arrangements note, and questions may be directed to the Governance Section at [hqgovern@unhcr.org](mailto:hqgovern@unhcr.org)

### **Discussion and Interventions, moderated by Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR**

**Jordan:** As a Co-convenor, Jordan welcomed the opportunity to contribute to preparations for the GRF Progress Review and recalled having convened a national whole-of-society consultation with over 100 actors from government, host and donor countries, UN agencies, civil society, refugees, academia, the private sector and development partners. From these consultations, Jordan highlighted three key messages: 1) sustained and inclusive partnerships are essential, with support for refugees and host communities remaining predictable, long term and grounded in equitable responsibility-sharing, 2) evidence-based approaches, including reliable data and strong monitoring systems, must guide collective efforts, and 3) the GRF Progress Review should focus on implementation and matching, ensuring that existing pledges targets are met and gaps addressed. Jordan reaffirmed its readiness to continue working closely with UNHCR and partners to translate commitments into concrete, sustainable progress for refugees and host communities.

**UNICEF:** UNICEF stressed that the GRF Progress Review comes at a critical moment for refugee children, who are disproportionately represented among displaced populations and face deepening vulnerabilities as education, child protection and social protection systems are under greater strain. Building on the [Child Rights Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#) and a recent biannual stocktaking event co-organized with Thailand and Brazil, UNICEF highlighted four priorities: (i) reaffirming and implementing existing child rights commitments through expanded access to national services; (ii) defending children's rights and countering stigmatizing narratives; (iii) investing in meaningful child and youth participation so that displaced children can shape policies affecting them; and (iv) strengthening national child protection systems through multi-year investments and partnerships. UNICEF affirmed its readiness to support stakeholders in ensuring that children remain at the centre of preparations for the GRF Progress Review and of follow-up to related pledges.

**Dentons** on behalf of **PILnet** and the [Global Legal Community Pledge](#): Dentons underlined that access to justice, legal aid and the rule of law are essential to robust asylum systems and the protection of refugees and stateless persons. The Pledge has mobilized substantial pro bono engagement from law firms and legal professionals worldwide, including targeted support for NGOs and refugee-led organisations. However, Dentons warned that legal needs are rising while funding for legal aid is shrinking, forcing some actors to scale back services, and that lawyers assisting asylum-seekers increasingly face intimidation and sanctions. Dentons conveyed three key messages: (i) legal assistance and legal empowerment can be lifesaving and must remain a funding priority; (ii) early access to legal help strengthens asylum systems and leads to fairer, more efficient outcomes; and (iii) governments should safeguard, not restrict, the ability of lawyers to represent all clients, including those without documentation.

**GISCOR, Grassroots Initiative for Strengthening Community Resilience** on behalf of the **Advisory Board to the UNHCR Task Team on Engagement with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons**: GISCOR highlighted three priorities for advancing inclusive and sustainable humanitarian action:

1. Safe, voluntary, and dignified return, noting challenges such as insecurity, destroyed housing, and limited services. GISCOR urged governments, UNHCR, and partners to restore essential services, support social cohesion and livelihoods, and ensure displaced people are involved in shaping return strategies. It also emphasized that return will not be possible for all, underscoring the need to strengthen asylum systems, expand complementary pathways, and address root causes of displacement.
2. Meaningful participation and localization, calling for the removal of barriers faced by refugee- and stateless-led organisations, alongside sustained funding, technical support, and genuine decision-making roles throughout planning and implementation. GISCOR encouraged support for the multi-stakeholder pledges on [meaningful refugee participation](#) and [localisation](#).
3. Addressing data fragmentation by promoting an inclusive and interoperable data ecosystem and a unified reporting framework to improve transparency and accountability. GISCOR concluded by thanking local partners and host communities and reaffirmed that displaced people are equal partners whose voices must remain central in all humanitarian planning.

**United Kingdom:** The United Kingdom thanked UNHCR for publishing the GCR Indicator Report and for the preparations for the GRF Progress Review, noting that the proposed programme strikes good a balance between key concerns and priorities. The UK underlined that the GRF Progress Review should not only take stock but also reaffirm commitment to the GCR and help refine and recalibrate the international response to forced displacement in a challenging global context. The UK expressed particular interest in discussions on refugee financing, refugee inclusion, and UN80 / Humanitarian Reset agenda, women and girls, statelessness, and meaningful refugee participation. The UK announced that it is supporting refugee participation at the GRF Progress Review and that a refugee delegate will join its national delegation.

### **Responses and closing remarks by Ms. Ruvendrini Menikdiwela, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection**

In closing, Ms. Menikdiwela expressed appreciation for Jordan's long-standing role as a major refugee-hosting country and affirming that its priorities are shared by UNHCR. UNICEF's emphasis on refugee children was welcomed, including calls to reaffirm child-rights commitments, align pledges across global processes, ensure meaningful child participation, and strengthen national child-protection systems. She thanked Dentons for highlighting the essential role of legal assistance, especially given funding constraints, and recognized the global legal community's efforts to exceed its commitments. The contributions from GISCOR, on behalf of the Advisory Board, were also acknowledged, particularly the points on solutions, including voluntary, safe, and dignified return, resettlement, and complementary pathways, along with meaningful refugee participation and the need to resolve data fragmentation and improve interoperability.

Ms. Menikdiwela took note of the UK's focus on refining global humanitarian efforts, its interest in several upcoming side events, and attention to women and girls. She expressed gratitude to the UK and Switzerland for supporting the participation of more than 100 refugees in the upcoming GRF Progress Review.