

Summary of the First Informal Briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees 2026

16 March 2026, 9:30-11:30 hours CET – ILO, Geneva

The first Informal Briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in 2026 took place on 16 March in Geneva and online. The central focus of the meeting was to present the key outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Progress Review 2025, as well as plans related to the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Opening remarks were given by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations Office at Geneva, H.E. Mr. Atsuyuki Oike, and UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (AHC-P) Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela. Following these, the Chief of the GCR Section at UNHCR, Mr. Nicolas Brass, presented the findings and recommendations of the GRF Progress Review outcome document, and the 75th anniversary plans. Stakeholders then had the opportunity to intervene from the floor, before closing remarks by the AHC-P.

Opening remarks by H.E. Mr. Atsuyuki Oike, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations Office at Geneva

H.E. Mr. Oike welcomed participants and underscored Japan's continued commitment to the GCR, noting that the engagements presented at the GRF Progress Review 2025 demonstrate the vitality of the whole-of-society approach at the heart of the Compact. Despite complex geopolitical challenges, he affirmed that, at the Progress Review, the international community showed that multilateralism does work, when grounded in responsibility-sharing and sustained collaboration.

He reiterated Japan's strong engagement toward the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus and emphasized the importance of building on the momentum generated through multi-stakeholder pledges and pledge-matching efforts. The recommendations emerging from the Progress Review were described as a valuable roadmap for the period ahead. H.E. Oike also welcomed the High Commissioner's vision to significantly reduce the number of protracted refugees depending on humanitarian assistance, and affirmed Japan's readiness to work with partners to translate recent pledges—financial, policy, and programmatic—into tangible and lasting impact.

Opening remarks by Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR

Ms. Menikdiwela highlighted the critical importance of leveraging the multi-stakeholder pledge framework as a central pillar of GCR implementation. She informed participants that updated guidance for pledging entities will be issued to support simplified reporting and improved matching in the lead-up to the Global Refugee Forum 2027.

Reflecting on the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention this year, Ms. Menikdiwela noted that today's global context poses challenges far more complex than those of 1951 or even the time of the 50th anniversary; yet, the Convention remains as relevant and lifesaving as ever. She emphasized the importance of safeguarding access to asylum, ensuring quality of asylum systems, expanding third-country pathways, and strengthening integration opportunities; areas that will form the thematic focus for the Convention's 75th anniversary and the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection 2026.

Presentation of the GRF Progress Review 2025 Outcome Document and plans related to the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention by Mr. Nicolas Brass, Chief of the Global Compact on Refugees Section, UNHCR

Mr. Brass presented an overview of the GRF Progress Review and recommendations emanating from the discussions to inform the way forward to the GRF 2027. He appreciated the strong and diverse engagement at the event, with approximately 1,500 participants from the GCR community including 260 participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness contributing to the process, and summarized feedback from the participants survey. He highlighted trends in pledge implementation and informed that some 30 new pledges were announced, signaling steady efforts in advancing the Compact's objectives. Nonetheless, Mr. Brass noted that there remain critical areas in need of additional support and whole-of-society investment.

Mr. Brass then detailed the set of recommendations emanating from the GRF Progress Review, which touch upon eight areas: (i) access to asylum; (ii) solutions; (iii) GRF pledge framework; (iv) multi-stakeholder engagement; (v) use of the GCR as a global anchor for efficiencies in line with UN80 and the Humanitarian Reset; (vi) refugee participation; (vii) data and digital inclusion; (viii) predictable financing (more details are available in the Outcome Document).

Mr. Brass also provided an update on planned activities to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention this year, which will be leveraged to emphasize opportunities to reaffirm the continued relevance of the international protection regime. These activities will center on four key areas of focus: safeguarding asylum systems, upholding refugee rights and self-reliance, advancing solutions, and addressing contemporary challenges through lawful and cooperative approaches. Together, they will also help inform pledge development in the leadup to the GRF 2027.

These efforts will culminate in December with the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection in Geneva, which is a unique moment distinct from the GRF for more informal and interactive dialogue designed to shape a new Agenda for Protection and Solutions, informed by High Commissioner Barham Salih's vision of fostering solutions and reducing dependency on humanitarian aid.

Discussion and Interventions

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for interventions from GCR stakeholders to share updates and reflections.

Switzerland, Co-host of the GRF Progress Review, remarked that conflict has doubled within the last decade, driving rising levels of forced displacement. In the context of the 1951 Convention 75th anniversary this year, Switzerland announced that it would host a commemoration in Geneva in December that would be an important occasion to reaffirm collective engagement in support of international protection and asylum. It welcomed the outcomes of the GRF Progress Review and stressed that GCR implementation must continue to prioritize protection, particularly for women and children, including along migratory routes where risks of trafficking and exploitation persist. Switzerland reaffirmed its commitment to promoting economic inclusion and highlighted the need for strengthened meaningful refugee participation and support to refugee-led and local actors.

Japan expressed strong support for the recommendations consolidated from the Progress Review and reaffirmed its commitment to the pledges it has made. It noted recent collaboration with UNDP under the HDP nexus multi-stakeholder pledge, including convening a high-level event and six roundtables, as well as highlighting a new climate-related initiative in South Sudan, undertaken in partnership with the Green Climate Fund, and similar initiatives in Ethiopia and the Syrian Arab Republic. Japan confirmed that the USD 77 million it pledged in December 2025 would be fully disbursed shortly and reaffirmed its dedication to working with the international community to convert pledges into long-term, sustainable impact.

Speaking on behalf of the **Civil Society Coalition**, Ms. Basma Alawee reaffirmed the enduring relevance of the 1951 Refugee Convention and emphasized that its core principles must remain intact. She underscored the need for narratives that highlight solidarity and partnership, noting that the GCR is rooted in responsibility-sharing and collective impact. She encouraged States and stakeholders to demonstrate that “partnership is the new leadership” and to continue strengthening meaningful participation mechanisms for displaced and stateless people.

Colombia expressed appreciation to UNHCR’s GCR Section for the successful convening of the GRF Progress Review, the participant survey analysis, and the accompanying proposals to inform the way forward. It highlighted the meaningful participation of stakeholders throughout the process and affirmed that the recommendations provide a strong basis for preparations toward the 2027 GRF.

The Netherlands praised the work of UNHCR’s GCR Section, commending the Progress Review and the diversity of the multi-stakeholder pledge process, and suggesting that future

engagements can be rendered more powerful through a more interactive and focused programme. It encouraged effective use of preparatory meetings leading up to events and expressed interest in collaborating on optimizing the pledge framework, underscoring its potential as a complementary funding source. It also welcomed a simplified and inclusive process for the 2027 GRF, observing that “less is more” in the current financial climate.

ITU highlighted the Connectivity multi-stakeholder pledge launched with Luxembourg and partners, emphasizing that most refugees reside in areas with limited digital connectivity, restricting access to essential services and opportunities. ITU reported that over one million people have benefitted from enhanced connectivity under the pledge and reiterated that “connectivity is not a luxury; it is a lifeline.” It emphasized the importance of long-term digital inclusion policies and identified three priority areas: inclusion, access, and uptake.

UNICEF stated that the Progress Review sent an important signal of consensus on inclusion and self-reliance, while observing that policy-level inclusion is advancing more rapidly than funding and resources. It highlighted that new displacement crises are testing GCR implementation and pointed to the Prospects Partnership as an example of effective multi-stakeholder collaboration. It stressed the importance of multi-year, predictable financing and nationally led frameworks that integrate refugees in national systems, such as health and education. UNICEF emphasized that the Compact’s success will ultimately be measured by whether refugee children and families can access protection systems.

Morocco noted that the GRF Progress Review Outcome Document and recommendations provide a solid basis for the road to the GRF 2027. It emphasized the need for emergency aid approaches that invest simultaneously in employment and host community development, and stressed the centrality of refugee protection, including efforts along migratory routes to combat trafficking networks and prevent refoulement. Morocco underscored the importance of systems for return and reintegration and called for further work on climate-related aspects of displacement. It also recommended that pledges for 2027 be clear, measurable, and underpinned by a robust monitoring framework.

Kenya reaffirmed the urgency of stronger responsibility sharing, while highlighting implementation of the Shirika Plan and progress made on national inclusion and the eradication of statelessness. It emphasized that greater impact is possible with increased and sustained funding for host governments and called for improved pledge tracking and matching to offer more clarity. It underscored three priorities: advancing durable solutions, particularly through sustainable peace; enhancing responsibility sharing; and ensuring that MSPs reinforce national systems, while reducing duplication where possible.

UNDP outlined three priorities for 2026: continued co-convening of the HDP Nexus MSP with Japan; renewal of its global partnership agreement with UNHCR for 2026–2030 to scale

resilience-focused collaboration; and advancement of the Cradle Initiative to unlock climate financing in displacement and climate-vulnerable contexts.

Belize recalled its history of displacement and emphasized that the work of the GCR “really means something to real people”. It noted that despite political challenges, Belize remains committed to supporting displaced populations, highlighting how individuals with a refugee background now hold senior leadership roles in the country, demonstrating the long-term societal contributions of persons with lived experience.

The United Kingdom stressed how valuable the GCR remains. It reported on its co-funding of over 100 refugee delegates to participate at the GRF Progress Review, and underlined the importance of host country-led inclusion, prioritizing women and girls, and enhancing conflict prevention efforts. It stated that meaningful refugee participation must now transition from presence to influence. It also called for sharper focus on delivery, stronger donor coordination and improved financing tools to advance pledge implementation. The UK suggested that the GCR and its pledge framework can be leveraged to support the ambition of reducing reliance on humanitarian assistance by 50%.

Niger reiterated its commitment to the GCR’s objectives and emphasized its ongoing solidarity in hosting displaced populations despite limited resources and regional instability. It stressed the importance of solutions that support both refugees and local communities and called for increased investments in host communities and long-term solutions.

Chile observed that UNHCR’s Executive Committee currently lacks a systematic role in overseeing follow-up on the Compact and GRF pledges. It asked how ExCom could strengthen its oversight function regarding pledge implementation, potentially through regular inclusion of the topic in the Standing Committee’s work cycle. Chile emphasized that the GCR is not merely a pledging exercise but a framework for measurable, accountable, and cost-effective action.

Pakistan stressed that meaningful responsibility sharing remains central to the Compact’s credibility, and noted that the Progress Review should serve not only as a stocktaking exercise but as a catalyst to accelerate pledge implementation. It underscored the need to focus on the root causes of displacement as part of a comprehensive solutions approach.

Closing Remarks by Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR

In closing, Ms. Menikdiwela thanked all participants in Geneva and online for their constructive engagement and continued commitment to advancing the GCR. She emphasized that the Progress Review clearly demonstrates both the collective achievements to date and the need for renewed responsibility sharing. She encouraged

stakeholders to maintain the momentum generated through the Review, deepen partnerships across sectors, and sustain efforts to address the root causes and consequences of forced displacement through the 75th anniversary campaign and toward the GRF 2027.

Ms. Menikdiwela reaffirmed UNHCR's commitment to supporting stakeholders in the implementation and matching of pledges and underscored that the coming months marked by the 75th anniversary of the Refugee Convention offer an important moment to champion protection, strengthen asylum, and advance durable solutions.