

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

*16 September 2025, 15:00-17:00 hours CEST – Palais de Nations, Geneva*

The third quarterly preparatory meeting for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Progress Review 2025, the second high-level officials' meeting (HLOM), took place on 16 September 2025 and focused on event preparations and programme, stocktaking progress, and updates from States and stakeholders.

### **Opening remarks by H.E. Ambassador Mr. Julien Thöni, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office at Geneva**

Co-chairing on behalf of Switzerland, the Co-host of the upcoming GRF Progress Review in December, Amb. Thöni acknowledged important progress achieved since the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in 2018, but also growing challenges—armed conflicts, violence, and the effects of climate change that are further fuelling forced displacement. He underscored that over 120 million people were forcibly displaced in 2024, of whom 75% are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, which are facing financial strain. Amb. Thöni stated that the upcoming GRF Progress Review is more than a stocktaking exercise, as it represents an opportunity to revive collective momentum that began at the first GRF in 2019 and was reaffirmed at the GRF in 2023.

Amb. Thöni called for concrete follow-up on the thousands of pledges made, stressing the importance of tangible impact for refugees and host communities. He shared that Switzerland particularly values the meaningful participation of refugees, an approach by which refugees are no longer only beneficiaries but actors of solutions. Amb. Thöni announced that Switzerland will support refugee participation at the GRF Progress Review, which will also bring together a wide range of actors including, among others, States, United Nations agencies, humanitarian and development actors, local authorities, the private sector and civil society. He further underlined Switzerland's priorities of protection, durable solutions, climate action, sustainable and quality financial resources, and localization through the active role of cities and local authorities. Amb. Thöni concluded by emphasizing that the next three months will be decisive to consolidate synergies, defend multilateralism, and give hope to those most in need.

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

Co-chair Ms. Menikdiwela stated that the GRF Progress Review is essential to take stock of progress, achievements, challenges, and opportunities in our collective efforts to implement the GCR. She also noted that it will not be business as usual, given record displacement, geopolitical tensions, and severe funding constraints. She noted the GCR has become a blueprint for multilateralism and solidarity in action, as reflected in the scale of pledging since 2019. She highlighted progress from the stocktaking process, including advances in economic inclusion, social protection frameworks, and skills and jobs initiatives reaching around 500,000 displaced people. Other developments include community sponsorship initiatives, progress on machine-readable refugee travel documents, and concrete pledge matches under asylum capacity. Ms. Menikdiwela emphasized the enabling role of regional support platforms, notably the newly established Chile Plan of Action Follow-up & Coordination Mechanism, which outlines 15 regional priorities for 2025–2027.

Ms. Menikdiwela underscored improvements in meaningful refugee participation, including consultations held with more than 60 refugee- and stateless-led organizations (RLOs) that informed the agenda of the GRF Progress Review. She concluded by encouraging all stakeholders to include refugees and stateless persons in their delegations, drawing attention to the recently published [Guidance for Stakeholders on Including Displaced and Stateless Persons in their Delegations](#).

## **Presentation by Mr. Nicolas Brass, Senior Policy Adviser and Head of the Global Compact on Refugees Coordination Team, UNHCR**

Mr. Brass updated on the roadmap to the upcoming GRF Progress Review, thanking delegations for their continued engagement and contributions to the stocktaking process which has yielded important results. He highlighted upcoming engagement opportunities, including the final preparatory meeting in November, where the next GCR Indicator Report will be launched; a side event at UNHCR's Executive Committee meeting; and global policy forums such as UNGA and the World Social Summit. He welcomed over 1,400 pledge updates received over the past year and stressed the importance of reporting to capture both progress and challenges. He also announced the imminent launch of a new online dashboard to enhance visibility of fulfilled pledges.

Mr. Brass presented the initial and non-exhaustive take-aways from the stocktaking process. He noted progress on refugee inclusion in national systems—such as health, education, social protection, child protection, mental health, and GBV—but flagged uneven progress due to funding gaps. He highlighted the multi-stakeholder pledge (MSP) on [Economic Inclusion and Social Protection](#) as a key driver, as well as modernization of asylum systems and advances in third country solutions, especially family reunification. He called on all entities to update their pledge implementation.

Mr. Brass reiterated the importance of pledge matching, acknowledging challenges and informing that the matching concept will be refined. He stressed the importance of building on good examples of reported matches to date in order to emulate and replicate future opportunities. He also emphasized the principle of genuine additionality, pairing policy pledges with new financial support. Acknowledging concerns about some pledges lacking budget plans, Mr. Brass stressed the importance of considering matching opportunities through innovative financing, such as debt swaps and bonds.

Looking ahead to the GRF Progress Review, Mr. Brass summarized the logistical details and then introduced the programme structure, which will feature plenary sessions including spotlight sessions, side events, linked events organized by partners, and sufficient space for discussions on regional topics. Mr. Brass presented the thematic mapping which will inform the programme, developed in consultation with all stakeholders. He emphasized the criticality of meaningful refugee participation, which will also feature in a “Speakers’ Corner” focused on lived experiences, and thanked Switzerland and donors for supporting refugee participation.

Mr. Brass concluded by urging continued momentum through pledge implementation and support to host countries. He reaffirmed that the GRF Progress Review must be a moment of stocktaking, renewed commitment, and shared responsibility, including through new announcements of support.

## **Discussion and interventions moderated by H.E. Ambassador Mr. Julien Thöni, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office at Geneva**

**Colombia:** As GRF 2023 Co-Convenor, Colombia spoke to its active engagement in regional and international processes reflecting its commitment to advance protection and durable solutions. This includes Cartagena+40, as well as the MIRPS Platform for which Colombia is currently President, and the four MIRPS regional pledges in support of strengthening protection systems, socio-economic inclusion, statistical inclusion, and child protection. Key actions included virtual learning on reducing refugee status determination backlogs and improving protection for women and girls, as well as a constitutional court ruling granting asylum-seekers the right to work, ahead of a consolidated refugee protection system expected by 2026. Colombia also highlighted under MIRPS regularization measures in support of socio-economic inclusion, and progress in statistical inclusion identified through stocktaking exercises co-led by Costa Rica and Honduras with EU support. Colombia emphasized the extension of the *Primero la Niñez* measure to prevent statelessness among children born to Venezuelan parents, and legal provisions to facilitate safe return and local integration for IDPs, and progress in implementing the UN Common Pledge.

**Chile:** Chile provided an update on [Cartagena+40](#), building on the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in December 2024 by Latin American and Caribbean countries as a solidarity framework to strengthen protection and inclusive solutions for refugees, displaced and stateless persons, and advance GCR implementation in the region. Chile explained that the Plan promotes cross-border identification, reception, referral mechanisms, and data collection and sharing. At the first Monitoring and Coordination Mechanism meeting in July 2025, 15 regional priorities were set for joint action over two years, alongside continued national-level implementation. Chile highlighted efforts to address statelessness, improve digital registration and case management, expand labour market access, and strengthen family reunification, and announced that the first Support Platform meeting will take place in November, with States, refugees, NGOs, UN agencies, development actors, and donors.

**Iraq:** Iraq reaffirmed its commitment to international solidarity and responsibility-sharing, describing pledge efforts to ensure refugees in Iraq enjoy equal rights with citizens, and a draft refugee law under review to establish a modern legal framework. Iraq updated on the work of the Permanent Committee for Political Refugee Affairs, which provides refugees essential services like identity cards, birth certificates and marriage contracts, as well as access to education, healthcare, and municipal services. It also highlighted social protection measures for vulnerable groups and efforts to facilitate freedom of movement including travel approvals and documentation like driving permits.

**Uganda:** As Co-convenor of the GRF 2023, Uganda recalled it had approached the GRF 2023 with high expectations, submitting pledges on self-reliance, climate action, and transitions to strengthen its refugee response. Uganda highlighted it hosts over 2 million refugees and receive 600 new arrivals every day. Against this backdrop, it faces severe pressure on food, education, and livelihoods, affecting both refugees and host communities. Uganda stressed the urgency for tangible support, warning that without adequate assistance, displaced people will risk all to move onward. Uganda concluded by urging the international community to turn pledges into action in support of hosts and to make the GRF Progress Review a platform for real responsibility-sharing.

**OECD:** Recalling its commitment at the GRF 2019 to submit official development assistance (ODA) data on refugee situations to inform GCR implementation, the OECD highlighted that its dataset now contributes to five of the 16 GCR indicators, supporting effective host country programming. The OECD updated that early findings show that ODA to refugee situations peaked at USD 14.4 billion in 2023, a slight increase from previous years, although 61% of this funding was short-term humanitarian aid. Responsibility-sharing also remained concentrated, with only four donors providing 74 per cent of financing, and 61% going to just seven recipient countries, which were primarily upper-middle-income countries. While in-donor refugee costs rose sharply in 2022–2023 due to the conflict in Ukraine, they declined in 2024 and are projected to fall further. Preliminary data shows a decline of 9% in overall ODA in 2024, with a further decline in 2025 of 9 to 17% forecast as well as a 21-36% decrease in humanitarian financing. The OECD warned that uneven distribution and short-term funding undermine comprehensive refugee responses and recalled the [DAC INCAF Common Position](#) pledge which underscores the importance of an HDP nexus approach to forced displacement.

**Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Centre:** The Uganda-based Centre announced its new role as co-lead of the [Multi-Stakeholder Pledge on Advancing Localisation](#), enabling RLOs to contribute directly to global policy. It reported progress since GRF 2023 across the Pledge's four focus areas of policy, capacity-sharing, participation, and funding, including: new strategies in Australia and Uganda as well as engagement by IFRC; NGO training by BRAC and legal aid from PILnet; flexible financing pilots from HIAS and ICVA to strengthen RLO leadership; and growing inclusion of women-led groups and RLOs in policy fora. Bondeko stressed that these gains are fragile, with funding cuts already impacting partnerships and participation of local actors. Bondeko underlined that localization must not be pursued to cut costs but to build equitable partnerships and shift power; inclusion in

decision-making of displaced- and stateless-led organizations is non-negotiable; and predictable, flexible funding is urgently needed to ensure delivery of critical services on the ground by local actors.

**PILnet:** PILnet, coordinator of the [Global Legal Community Multi-stakeholder Pledge](#), reported that despite strong commitment, access to legal aid under the Pledge for displaced persons has worsened due to funding cuts of up to 60%, forcing NGOs to close offices, reduce staff, and end partnerships. Increased detention, fast-tracked asylum timelines, and digital-only procedures further limit refugee legal support, and PILnet reported increased challenges faced by pro bono law firms, spanning from harassment to prosecution. PILnet stressed how legal assistance can be life-saving and must be recognized as essential to humanitarian response; how early access to such assistance can strengthen asylum systems and lead to fairer outcomes; and how the rule of law requires that lawyers be able to represent all clients, including undocumented asylum seekers.

**Diieva Hromada on behalf of UNHCR's Advisory Board (AB) of Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons:** Diieva Hromada stressed that 123 million forcibly displaced people are not just statistics, making a call for durable solutions. She stressed that displaced and stateless persons must lead in policy design, monitoring and implementation and be resourced to do so; housing, land, and property rights are central to dignity, and durable solutions must be shaped with affected communities; RLOs need more direct, multi-year funding; and pledges must be tracked through inclusive, transparent and disaggregated data collected with displaced communities. Diieva Hromada urged meaningful inclusion of those with lived experience in leadership and decision-making to ensure dignity, equality, and human rights are at the core of durable solutions.

**France:** As Co-convenor of the GRF 2023, France reaffirmed its commitment to GCR implementation, calling it the most effective tool to address forced displacement. Recalling its “Avec Elles” MSP for the protection and inclusion of refugee and displaced women and girls, launched at the GRF 2023, France noted that the GRF Progress Review will be an opportunity to assess initial results. France updated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will host consultations and events in Paris in November to review progress by French stakeholders in implementing their commitments.

**Jordan:** As Co-convenor of the GRF 2023, Jordan highlighted progress in economic inclusion, social protection, and expanded refugee access to national education, including higher education, and improvements in access to mental health services, child protection, and positive parenting support. Jordan also pointed to investments in climate and energy projects that promote inclusion and resilience. Steady progress was reported by mid-2025 on many of the 73 pledges made in support of refugees there, but Jordan emphasized the ongoing need for predictable, sustained financing to ensure that gains can be consolidated.

**RefugePoint on behalf of the Global Family Reunification Network:** Updating on the [Supporting Refugee Family Reunification](#) MSP, RefugePoint announced the release of the first annual pledge progress report, combining best practices and data from 35 partners, showing how individual commitments build a broader multi-stakeholder pledge community. Preliminary data suggests the network is on track to help one million refugees reunite with family by 2030. It was however reported that restrictive policies in some countries continue to hinder access to family reunification.

**Plan International on behalf of the Child Rights Initiative:** Plan International recalled that the [Child Rights](#) MSP focuses on protection, participation, education, and access to essential services, with 95 pledges made at the GRF 2023 to improve refugee children's lives, of which several are making a tangible impact. Examples include the Bogotá Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Bogotá, which gathered leaders from 130 countries in 2024 to garner new commitments; the Dutch-funded PROSPECTS Partnership which is expanding protection in the Middle East and North Africa, and new measures are being taken in Switzerland and Greece to protect unaccompanied children. Plan International indicated that Multi-Stakeholder Pledge areas in

need of more engagement include child participation and social protection, and warned that funding cuts, restrictive asylum policies, and rising xenophobia are threatening progress and limiting access to services.

**Youth Initiative for Development:** Speaking for the [Meaningful Refugee Participation](#) MSP, Youth Initiative for Development updated on the 2025 joint workplan focused on embedding refugee participation in policy, strengthening advocacy, and tracking progress. Highlights include the establishment of refugee advisory boards in Canada, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand; Uganda's Refugee Engagement Forum; and new partnerships in Asia-Pacific where the UK is supporting five RLOs to access direct funding and capacity development. RELON-Kenya's technical working group is advancing participation, with virtual training sessions helping equip stakeholders with tools for effective refugee engagement.

**International Detention Coalition (IDC):** The IDC, co-leading the MSP on [Alternatives to Detention](#) (AtD) with UNICEF, highlighted both concerning trends and promising practices, noting that detention is rising in many parts of the world, with harmful impacts on displaced persons, but also positive initiatives under the Pledge that are offering viable alternatives. Colombia's sharing of non-detention practices with African countries as a cross-regional exchange was cited as one example, as was the release of over 2,000 children in Thailand under an AtD memorandum and the establishment of a regional peer-learning platform established with governments in Asia-Pacific (Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, and New Zealand). IDC stressed the harmful impact of detention and that alternatives are more humane, cost-effective, and better at ensuring compliance.

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

Ms. Menikdiwela expressed her gratitude to all delegations and stakeholders for their substantive contributions, noting that the breadth of interventions reflected both progress achieved and the urgency of remaining challenges. She welcomed the regional leadership highlighted by Colombia and Chile, the advancement of a refugee law in Iraq, and Uganda's powerful reminder of the pressures facing major host countries. She also acknowledged the analyses of the OECD and the contributions of civil society, refugee-led organizations, and the legal community, emphasizing that their work remains vital despite funding constraints. Finally, she reiterated the importance of meaningful refugee participation across all processes and underlined that the GRF Progress Review must be a moment of genuine stocktaking and renewed responsibility-sharing.