

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE  
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

64th Session

30 September – 4 October 2013

**NGO General Debate Statement**

**Agenda Item 4**

Madame Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of non-governmental organizations. It has been drafted in consultation with, and aims to reflect the diversity of views of, the NGO community.

Because this year's Executive Committee schedule has been compressed, we have collapsed the NGO statements into a list of the top ten actionable items we feel require the immediate attention of UNHCR and Member States:

**First, while the war in Syria grips our attention, we urge the UN and donors to adequately respond to humanitarian crises in other parts of the world as well.** We are obliged by the principles of humanity and impartiality to respond to human suffering wherever it is found. We understand the level of attention given to the humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis. At the same time, multiple other emergencies are currently being overlooked or are at the risk of being forgotten. One example would be the 2,081 families in Nzula IDP camp, near Sake in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), who have been without a source of clean water since June. Other examples include the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Sahel. Donors should provide adequate funding based on need.

**Second, we urge States to ensure international protection for those fleeing across borders, including by ensuring access to territory and adhering to the principle of non-refoulement.** In particular, we urge the government of Kenya to comply with its High Court's decision regarding its Urban Directive and refrain from contributing to an atmosphere that results in induced or involuntarily repatriation of Somali refugees. Furthermore, we call on all states in the Asia Pacific region participating in the Jakarta Declaration -- particularly Australia as it retreats from basic Convention obligations -- to work together on comprehensive approaches that respect the basic principles of refugee protection. In addition, we urge Latin American states to take advantage of the 2014 anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration to reaffirm the endurance and validity of the regional protection regime and its broadened refugee definition.

**Third, we urge States to take action in support of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.** While there has been significant momentum on statelessness since the 2011 Ministerial Meeting, more should be done to resolve protracted situations, such as those affecting the Rohingya in Myanmar and former Soviet citizens in Europe and Central Asia. NGOs support the High Commissioner's goal to eradicate statelessness within a decade, and stand ready to support the implementation of ExCom's Conclusion on Civil Registration as this will help to prevent statelessness for future generations. NGOs are alarmed by statelessness risks in the Dominican Republic resulting from a recent court ruling that all persons whose parents were in transit or without legal documentation since 1929 are not Dominicans. It is a principle of international law that no one should be deprived of a nationality if it risks their becoming stateless.

**Fourth, we encourage UNHCR and States to promote legal frameworks, policies, funding and coordination for internally displaced persons (IDPs).** Despite the humanitarian reforms launched in 2005, we have yet to enjoy a humanitarian system that consistently provides robust, responses to internal displacement from conflicts and natural disasters. The December 2013 High Commissioner's Dialogue on IDPs marks an opportunity to galvanize support for two priorities: the implementation of the Kampala Convention and the Secretary General's Durable Solutions Framework. In addition, the next round of UNHCR budget discussions will provide an opportunity to ensure adequate, predictable, and operational coverage for IDPs. Donors should provide greater support to UNHCR in its role as protection cluster lead, and UNHCR must prioritise this role.

**Fifth, we call on UNHCR and States to better support refugees and displaced persons living in urban areas and other non-camp settings.** The real time evaluation of UNHCR's response to Syrian refugees identified the need to significantly boost the humanitarian community's outreach to non-camp refugees, strengthen mass information activities, ensure equitable refugee access to public services, and expand international support to public services in host countries. Refugees and IDPs live outside camps in all regions, and humanitarian programming must be resourced accordingly. We should pursue creative and practical strategies to promote income generation, safe employment and social inclusion for this population. We appreciate the work of the UNHCR-NGO Urban Task team to share best practices.

**Sixth, we urge UNHCR and Member States to better support host communities.** We have seen in the past, for example with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, that the pursuit of durable solutions for refugees suffers when tensions with host communities are not addressed. A far more substantial and coherent strategy is needed to address host communities, including the involvement of development actors, financial institutions, and the private sector.

**Seventh, we urge UNHCR and Member States to maintain their commitment to Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD)-sensitive programming.** We hope UNHCR's new policy on community-based protection will improve UNHCR's engagement with affected populations. More should be done to improve prevention and response programming, meet established minimum standards, and ensure that the voices of women, children, adolescents and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, and minority groups are heard.

**Eighth, we urge all States to refrain from arbitrary detention.** Asylum and migration-related detention is on the rise. Detention harms the health and well being of those affected, particularly children and families, and infringes on their human rights. UNHCR should continue to advocate for states to implement alternatives to detention. UNHCR's October 2012 Detention Guidelines should be implemented in practice. Here again, NGOs stand ready to assist.

**Ninth, we encourage UNHCR and Member States to more systematically support local partner capacity building.** National and local NGOs are present before, during and after a humanitarian crisis. They can often provide good services at low cost, but may need help to become familiar and comply with increasing reporting and other administrative requirements. We look forward to assisting UNHCR in the coming months to map out existing capacity building projects and lay the framework for the development of an institutional strategy for capacity building.

**Finally, we strongly encourage UNHCR, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs to strengthen their application of the Principles of Partnership in their daily interactions with one another.** This can be enhanced in the coming year with the field roll-out of the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue, training on the updated Framework for Implementing with Partners, and ongoing streams of work flowing from the 2012 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Faith and Protection. All of these initiatives require time, patience, good communication, resources, and a long-term commitment.

We look forward to monitoring progress in the future.

Thank you, Madame Chair.