

Summary of the first Global Refugee Forum by the co-convenors

The Republic of Costa Rica

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Federal Republic of Germany

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The Republic of Turkey

and

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. The first ever Global Refugee Forum took place on 17 and 18 December 2019 and was a true milestone in the advancement of the international refugee regime. It brought the international community together to demonstrate solidarity with the world's refugees and the countries and communities that host them, to announce pledges and contributions that support them, and to commit to a continued search for solutions. We—Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Germany, Pakistan, Turkey and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—were honoured to serve as co-convenors of this historic event, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland. We thank Switzerland for co-hosting the Forum with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and all those who actively contributed to making the Forum a success, including governments, international organizations, representatives from across the humanitarian and development worlds, business leaders, civil society, sports organizations, faith groups, academia, and refugees themselves. Comprehensive refugee responses require the joint engagement of all stakeholders.
2. The Forum, which was preceded by a day of important special events dedicated to the refugee cause, was the first time that the international community had gathered to announce concrete steps towards the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. This was a unique opportunity to enhance international cooperation and solidarity, and to galvanize support for more equitable and predictable burden and responsibility sharing in refugee situations. Reflecting the importance of the occasion, the Forum was attended by some 3,000 participants, including four Heads of State or Government, more than eighty Ministers, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, approximately eighty international organizations (including United Nations system entities and specialized agencies), representatives of more than 100 companies and foundations, and approximately 200 civil society organizations. It also generated considerable interest from the public at large and positive media coverage around the world. The seventy refugees who attended the Forum emphasized the unprecedented depth of their engagement in the preparations for this global discussion of refugee issues and the event itself, as well as the pledges they themselves have made to contribute to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.
3. The Forum took place at a time of great urgency for the international refugee regime. There are currently more than 25 million refugees around the world, and millions of them have lived in protracted situations for more than a generation. The number of refugees has doubled over the last tumultuous decade and continues to climb. More than half of all refugees are under the age of 18, and the vast majority of them live in low- and middle-income countries. These countries welcome refugees and provide protection and assistance in spite of their own challenges and the additional strains that hosting large numbers of refugees may place on their economies, the provision of services and the environment. Those remarkable efforts of host countries save lives, provide protection, safeguard fundamental rights, and contribute to stability, peace and security. Despite the tremendous generosity of host countries and the impactful contributions of donors, however, the gap between needs and the resources required to meet them has widened. Much more must be done to protect and build a future for the world's refugees, to find durable solutions and to support host countries through international cooperation, solidarity, and more equitable burden and responsibility sharing.

4. The Forum also took place, however, at a time of great opportunity. Following the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, the initial phase of the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and a process of multilateral and multi-stakeholder discussion and consultation, the General Assembly of the United Nations affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees one year ago, on 17 December 2018. Grounded in the international refugee protection regime, the Global Compact aims to ease pressures on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States and people around the world formulated the goal to leave no one behind. With the Global Compact on Refugees, we have a global framework to ensure that refugees and host communities receive the support they need. The upcoming decade should focus on addressing the root causes of large refugee situations, including through prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, achieving lasting solutions, and greater coherence in the work of humanitarian, development and peace actors.

5. The first Global Refugee Forum was an historic opportunity to strengthen our collective response to forced displacement and to translate the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees into concrete action. In this regard, States and other stakeholders underlined the need to address the root causes of refugee situations, including through accelerated global efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts. It was an opportunity for States and other stakeholders to demonstrate leadership, vision, and their ambition to share burdens and responsibilities by announcing pledges and making contributions to improve refugee protection and to find solutions. Participants also shared good practices that illustrate how host countries and communities are implementing the principles of the Global Compact and how comprehensive responses can make a difference in the lives of refugees and host communities around the world. These are featured in a digital platform that was launched at the Forum and that will continue to collect and share good practices.

6. The first Global Refugee Forum had six key areas of focus: burden and responsibility sharing, education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions, and protection capacity. Progress in each of these areas was driven forward by a coalition of engaged co-sponsors (including refugee co-sponsors). As co-sponsors, they formed alliances of support and advocacy, and identified opportunities for the making of pledges and contributions. At the country and regional level, more than thirty whole-of-government and whole-of-society consultations were held to identify possible pledges and contributions.

Outcomes

7. Impactful pledges and contributions were announced by a wide range of stakeholders at the Forum towards the achievement of ten key outcomes. We thank all those who submitted pledges and made contributions, which will be consolidated and published in full shortly. We wish in particular to highlight the impressive range of joint contributions whereby States and/or other stakeholders committed to work together towards the attainment of a collective outcome. We hope that the international community will keep this momentum in the period ahead. The spirit of partnership inherent in joint contributions reflects the nature of the Global Compact on Refugees, and we look forward to their further expanded use.

8. The Forum made significant progress towards **broadening the base of support** for comprehensive refugee responses, a key goal of the Global Compact on Refugees. By the close of proceedings, more than 770 pledges and contributions were submitted by a broad range of actors, from governments and humanitarian actors to private sector entities, educational institutions and sporting organizations. Many of these pledges and contributions represent a considerable increase in the level of engagement of many States and organizations, which we commend highly. In particular, we saw a commitment to further and deeper engagement from development actors and multilateral development banks through a range of financing and policy instruments. This enhanced engagement can play an important role in support of the national plans and efforts of host countries to meet the development-oriented needs of refugees and host communities.

9. A commendable number of States committed to the development of **more inclusive national policies** to enable refugees to become active and contributing members of the communities in which they live. More than 350 pledges related to improving laws and policies were received, including pledges to continue to receive and admit refugees, to adopt 'out of camp' policies and strengthen asylum systems, to allow refugees and asylum seekers to work and access financial services, and to include refugees in their national development planning, as well as their national systems for education and health. Including displaced populations in national systems and services builds their self-reliance and can improve the efficiency of existing support systems, and we encourage States and other stakeholders to explore ways in which they can support the implementation of these ambitious pledges.

10. We welcome that many stakeholders recognized and respected the **diversity amongst displaced persons** in their pledges, in particular through commitments that aim to prevent, mitigate and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, as well as those that seek to empower women and girls in displacement contexts; addressing disability among displaced populations was, rightly, another key area of engagement and pledging. Importantly, many stakeholders also pledged to meaningfully engage refugees in all processes and decisions which affect them.

11. The Forum featured the **launch of Support Platforms** to reinforce three regional refugee responses, namely the MIRPS in Central America and Mexico, the Nairobi Process facilitated by IGAD in the East and Horn of Africa, and the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees. Support Platforms are situation-specific arrangements for burden and responsibility sharing provided for in the Global Compact on Refugees; they aim to galvanize political commitment, mobilize assistance, facilitate coherent humanitarian and development responses, and support comprehensive policy initiatives. They seek to build long-term partnerships to support refugees and their hosts, as well as countries of origin where appropriate, and are a critical means to broaden the base of support for comprehensive responses and solutions. We commend the States and other stakeholders that have expressed a willingness to take part.

12. Significant **additional funding for refugee responses** and a commitment to an effective and efficient use of resources, particularly in major refugee-hosting countries, was also announced. Almost 250 pledges contained some form of financial component. An initial analysis indicates the following: some USD 2.2 billion was pledged by the World Bank Group, through a dedicated funding and financing window for refugees and host communities, in addition to a separate window of USD 2.5 billion to boost the private sector and create jobs in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence (including also low-income refugee-hosting countries). A similar announcement was made by the Inter-American Development Bank in the amount of USD 1 billion. In addition, a broad range of States and other stakeholders also pledged financial support for refugees and their host communities to the sum of over USD 2 billion.

13. Remarkable progress was also made towards **expanding access to education for refugees**, with more than 130 pledges made, many focusing on supporting the inclusion of refugees in national systems. Despite recent gains, education is one of the key areas in which refugees fall farthest behind: 3.7 million refugee children and youth are out of primary and secondary school, and only 3 per cent of refugees have access to higher education. We therefore welcome the pledges and contributions to support access to quality education for refugees and their hosts, from the onset of an emergency and including early childhood, primary, and secondary education as well as tertiary and technical and vocational education and training programmes. These pledges will enhance the quality of education for all through innovative approaches, a focus on teachers and system strengthening, and greater investments in connected education. These and further efforts in the field of education will be essential to build refugees' potential and self-reliance and lay the groundwork for sustainable solutions.

14. In view of the growing incidence of climate-linked displacement and the considerable environmental impacts of large refugee situations, we applaud the pledges and contributions from nearly forty States and other stakeholders in support of **green energy and conservation** efforts, including in areas hosting large numbers of refugees. 28 States and other stakeholders accepted UNHCR's Clean Energy Challenge, which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all refugee

settlements and nearby host communities by 2030. There were also pledges to support **infrastructural services** essential to the protection and wellbeing of refugees and their hosts, including health, WASH, connectivity and shelter.

15. We also welcome the active **engagement of the private sector** in refugee responses and the Forum itself, with more than 200 pledges and contributions from the private sector. These included more than USD 250 million in funding, the direct employment of more than 15,000 refugees, a joint legal community pledge with NGOs to provide more than 125,000 hours of pro bono legal services per year, and other pledges in relation to education and training, women's economic empowerment, connectivity, business development services, innovative financing and Islamic philanthropy.

16. Progress towards **expanding the availability of solutions** was also made. A number of host States pledged to integrate specific groups of refugees, whilst countries of origin pledged to work to create conditions for voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable returns, including through efforts to resolve conflict, promote the rule of law and build peace. States and other stakeholders pledged to use their political and financial resources to address root causes, create conditions that enable refugees to return home voluntarily and to help them to rebuild their countries, including through financial support to countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. States and other actors also demonstrated promising commitment towards **expanding the availability of third-country solutions** with almost 100 pledges made, including contributions towards the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways. Given the persistent gap between the needs and availability of third-country solutions, it is notable that several States pledged to expand or consolidate their resettlement programmes, and that emerging resettlement countries stressed their ongoing commitment. A number of States also pledged to establish or explore private and community sponsorship schemes and other complementary pathways for the admission of refugees, such as mobility for the purpose of labour and education.

17. Finally, the Global Refugee Forum also featured the launch of the **Asylum Capacity Support Group** and the **Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network**, both of which seek to make the best use of, build upon, and expand existing knowledge and expertise relating to various aspects of refugee protection and in support of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. We welcome the pledges of technical, financial and other support to those countries that have committed to establish or improve asylum procedures, as well as the commitments from academia and others to support the implementation of the Global Compact, including through research, teaching on forced displacement, and expanding academic opportunities for refugees.

Looking to the future

18. The first Global Refugee Forum is not an end point in itself; rather, it is the first key milestone in the process of implementing the Global Compact on Refugees and transforming the way in which the international community responds to forced displacement. The international community has made ground-breaking commitments to facilitate this transformation; they must now be translated into concrete outcomes. We encourage States and other stakeholders to continue to explore opportunities to make individual and joint contributions in a spirit of partnership and cooperation. The mechanism that UNHCR has developed to track the implementation of pledges and contributions and the mid-term review meeting in 2021 will be important tools to assess progress and maintain momentum in advance of the second Global Refugee Forum four years from now, where we will aim again to redouble our efforts.

19. Much remains to be done and it is through preventing and resolving conflicts, upholding international law, as well as predictable and sustained global engagement—guided by the essential principles of solidarity and burden and responsibility sharing—that we will truly transform our collective response and change the lives of refugees and their hosts.