



3rd Quarterly Briefing on Follow-Up to the Global Refugee Forum

Opening remarks by Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection

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Welcome to this public, virtual, and informal briefing on follow-up to the Global Refugee Forum. My colleagues and I are very pleased to have this opportunity to provide an update on progress.

It has now been nine months since the Forum in December last year. Around 1,400 pledges (including those made at the High-Level Segment on Statelessness) were made by governments, NGOs, local communities, businesses, academics, and religious groups, among others. The Forum generated renewed commitments to the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), and all of us at UNHCR were energized by the optimism and support of so many in the international community. The real test of the success of the Forum, however, was always going to be implementation of the pledges in concrete and practical ways.

Over these last months, challenged as we have all been by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are able to make some general observations about the implementation of substantive pledges and to draw some lessons and themes from them that can guide our work leading up to the High Level Officials Meeting in December next year and the next Global Refugee Forum in another three years.

The details of the pledges are available on the Digital Platform for the GCR that includes progress in their implementation.

In summary, despite the pandemic, implementation is progressing well. We have reports from governments, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society on over 400 of the original pledges: 70 per cent are in progress, 22 per cent are in the planning stage, 22 pledges are fulfilled.

Most pledges relate to protection and solutions, with a strong emphasis on education and social inclusion. Two-hundred-eighty pledges include a financial commitment that can be implemented quite easily, while others are generic and require further work to specify and direct.

Some promising examples include:

- an International Chamber of Commerce pilot on solar power to Cox's Bazar,
- a Sesame workshop on the response to the pandemic, which provides Arabic education for Syrian and Rohingya refugees,
- the DAFI program on access to higher education for refugees, which is growing, and
- Costa Rica's pledge to provide health insurance for 6,000 refugees that has been 90 per cent fulfilled.

Our donor States and stakeholders remain strongly engaged and work well with UNHCR in guiding implementation. We have been briefing governments and NGOs regularly, in Geneva and New York,

and have provided reports such as the [outcome document](#) and a paper on [The role of the Global Compact on Refugees in the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

We are being asked about results. As implementation becomes clearer, we will be prepared with evidence to demonstrate the impact of specific pledges.

In short, we believe that COVID-19, while slowing implementation in some areas, has not led to any serious loss of momentum. Indeed, in some cases, the virus has accelerated the implementation of some pledges, stimulated matching with new partners, and prompted agreement on action plans. Projects for implementation have also been identified, and progress is being tracked at the local level.

The Bureaux and around 100 focal points throughout UNHCR – local, regional, and global – have played an active role in nurturing pledges to grow them from abstract and imprecise ones to concrete projects with practical effect.

I should stress that the number of pledges by stakeholders is not the sole criterion for impact. Rather the quality and level of political commitment are more important. It may be, for example, that work done through the Support Platforms – MIRPS, IGAD and SSAS – has been among the most effective means of implementing the GCR.

Some States chose to make only a verbal commitment, but, true to their word, they are now taking stronger steps. Also, a few days ago, Azerbaijan announced both an agreement to include refugees in its national health system and the passing of a law to implement it.

The matching of pledges of policy commitments and financial or technical support has proved to be a successful means of practical implementation, creating a dynamic environment that is strengthening over time as new partners join and as projects evolve. Good models include the Denmark / Rwanda partnership on jobs and livelihoods, and the agreements between France and Chad and Niger on support for asylum capacity.

Matching also ensure some agility to meet new crises. COVID-19 has provided the opportunity to orient some pledges toward strengthening access to health systems, as health had attracted fewer pledges last December but, of course, is now a global priority.

COVID-19 has also demonstrated the continued relevance, indeed the imperative, of the vision of the Compact for global solidarity and responsibility sharing. Collaboration among States and communities will be vital if we are to be resilient in face of not only COVID-19, but also of other emergencies that we may face in the future.

I wish to stress the importance of communications so that the Compact and the pledges are highly visible: one challenge is that the pledges could be seen as a 'process' rather than news-worthy. Now that we know more and have evidence of what works, we want to highlight successful partnerships to give them a better global and regional profile.

We also hope to broaden the base of support by attracting new partners such as the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, China, and International Financial Institutions, such as the Asia Development Bank.

With those brief comments, I look forward to hearing yours views and any questions and thank you for your support.