



Informal Briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees

Summary

6 March 2023, CIGG, 15:00-17:00 hrs CET

The first quarterly informal briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) of 2023 was held on 6 March. The briefing brought together States and other stakeholders to provide updates on the work of multi-stakeholder GCR initiatives, including their planning towards the next Global Refugee Forum (GRF) to be held in December 2023. The session, moderated by Ms. Anne Keah, Head of the Governance Service at UNHCR, was opened by the Coordinator for the Global Refugee Forum 2023, Mr. Arafat Jamal, followed by an update from the three Support Platforms – [IGAD](#), [MIRPS](#), [SSAR](#) – and four GCR Initiatives – The Global Taskforce on Labour Mobility, Poverty Alleviation Coalition, Refugee Sports Coalition, and Age, Gender, Diversity Group of Friends, as well as interventions from the floor from a range of States and multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Opening Remarks by the GRF Coordinator, Mr. Arafat Jamal

Mr. Jamal emphasised the importance of responsibility-sharing and the need for the international community to make bold commitments in support of host countries and communities. He recalled his recent mission to Uganda, one of the co-conveners of the next GRF. Uganda’s whole-of society roadmap towards the GRF 2023, under the theme “Uganda: The World’s Model for the Refugee Response – Let’s Make It Sustainable”, was launched on 28 February 2023 in the presence of Ugandan ministers, ambassadors from large donor countries, refugee leaders, the private sector, NGOs, United Nations agencies, and the Secretariat for the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

Mr. Jamal recalled the GCR’s aim of expanding the base of cooperation and partnership, at both local and global levels, using a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach. He highlighted the importance of Regional Support Platforms and thematic initiatives and announced that WHO and UNHCR will be establishing a Group of Friends on Health with the ambition of generating pledges toward inclusion in national healthcare systems. He encouraged all stakeholders to inform UNHCR of the themes and regions in which they are considering advancing pledges.

IGAD Support Platform

Mr. Charles Obila, IGAD Support Platform Coordinator, presented the priorities and objectives for the [IGAD Support Platform](#) for the GRF 2023. He highlighted that the IGAD Support Platform plans to explore a joint pledge related to climate change and the environment, in addition to pursuing progress in the existing areas of focus. He noted that the least progress had been seen relating to return and reintegration and stressed the concern that pursuing return too vigorously may lead to new displacement.

Mr. Obila reported that IGAD has planned activities to support Member States in designing national GRF roadmaps. As of March 2023, Uganda is the only country with a GRF 2023 roadmap, while other countries are currently consulting on theirs. To support the process, there will be a planning workshop in April, followed by a stocktaking event with IGAD Ministers in June. Additionally, an exchange between IGAD and East African Community (EAC) countries is under consideration.

In closing, Mr. Obila turned to the Solutions Initiative for Sudan and South Sudan, which has now been adopted by both Member States, and highlighted the significant resources required for this initiative, in addition to sub-national coordination with cities and local authorities.

MIRPS Support Platform

Ms. Martha Marrazza, Humanitarian Affairs Attaché for the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations Offices and other international organizations in Geneva, recalled that the United States was this year's [MIRPS Support Platform Chair](#), and shared the strategy for 2023, which focuses on showcasing contributions that forcibly displaced people bring to their new communities.

Ms. Marrazza noted that an inventory exercise is currently underway, allowing MIRPS to work alongside States to identify good practices of successful local integration, education, health, documentation, and livelihoods for people forced to flee. Based on the examples, MIRPS will design learning activities such as workshops and field visits, to support MIRPS country needs. It is anticipated that new pledges will be submitted based on this process, which may come with requests for additional support, providing an opportunity for other stakeholders to match MIRPS-related pledges.

Ms. Marrazza said that the United States has three objectives as Chair of the MIRPS Support Platform. First, ensuring that the governance and accountability mechanisms are reinforced. To this end, a public reporting platform will be established. It will showcase efforts on new partnerships with various stakeholders, track the implementation of the learning activities, and connect announcements of new support and potential resources mobilised. Secondly, bolstering collaboration between private sector multilateral development banks and civil society actors will benefit refugees and forcibly displaced people in MIRPS countries by finding successful local solutions through deepening partnerships. Thirdly, guaranteeing that MIRPS countries have increased capacity and resources will help facilitate successful local solutions.

SSAR Support Platform

Ms. Katarina Clifford, Counsellor at the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations Offices and other international organizations in Geneva, represented the EU, the current Chair of the [SSAR Support Platform](#), and provided an update on the Platform and considerations for the GRF 2023.

Ms. Clifford noted that the SSAR Support Platform has faced many challenges which changed the operational landscape, including the political changes in Afghanistan, COVID, and devastating flooding in Pakistan –

challenges which may lead to further displacement. It is in this context that the Support Platform is preparing for GRF 2023.

Ms. Clifford explained that during the EU chairmanship, the focus has been on strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, and that despite challenges, the global and local core groups have remained engaged.

The SSAR Chair called for additional support to the 20 million people in Afghanistan needing humanitarian assistance, including 6 million on the brink of famine. The EU recently reconfirmed its commitment to support Afghan people in need and reaffirmed that it would also continue to provide support to the neighboring and transit countries for refugees and host communities.

Global Taskforce on Labour Mobility

Ms. Eilis Pourbaix, First Secretary, Migration and Refugee Affairs, at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations Offices and other international organizations in Geneva, provided background on the Global Taskforce on Labour Mobility, chaired by Canada, and offered a summary of their GRF 2023 preparations, including their work towards a joint pledge.

The Chair highlighted the task force's work on enablers of labour mobility, such as partnerships, communities of practice, data, and removing barriers. The Chair announced that the network is preparing an ambitious and collective pledge for the GRF 2023 that will go beyond task force members and include an overarching commitment to expand safe labour mobility pathways.

In March 2023, a workshop was held in Amman covering what this joint pledge should contain. The Chair highlighted that potential contributions may include establishing or adjusting legal frameworks that support the entry, exit, and right of return; making funding available to refugees to cover application costs; data tracking to show the impact of labor mobility pathways over time; recognition of refugee skills and work experience; skills development opportunities; and including refugees in professional development programmes.

The Chair invited all interested permanent missions and other stakeholders to join the pledge. The task force will continue discussions throughout the year, including at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) and during a series of technical and awareness-raising sessions.

Poverty Alleviation Coalition

Ms. Sarah Estermann, Knowledge Management Officer at Caritas Switzerland, recalled that the [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#) provides extremely poor households with tailored self-reliance packages through "[graduation programmes](#)", and presented their progress since the GRF 2019. She announced that the Coalition

will be working on a new pledge to support a further 500,000 refugee and host community households in 35 countries to become self-reliant by the third GRF due to be held in 2027.

At the GRF 2019, the Coalition pledged to target 160,000 households in 26 countries by the end of 2023. As of March 2023, the Coalition has reached 102,000 households in 23 countries by raising USD 168 million from a diverse donor base, including governments, foundations, and the private sector. The Coalition hopes to mobilise additional support for their roadmap, both globally and at country level, by reaching out bilaterally to existing and new supporters. The Coalition will participate in a global stocktaking meeting that the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) plan to arrange with donors in order to request additional support in fulfilling the existing pledge while calling on a wide range of stakeholders to work together on the new pledge.

Sports for Refugees Coalition

Ms. Jojo Ferris, Head of the Olympic Refugee Foundation, provided an update on the first joint sports pledge of the Sports for Refugees Coalition, which was announced by the President of the International Olympic Committee at GRF 2019. As of March 2023, the Coalition members are active in more than 30 countries, providing access to sports facilities and initiatives, training young refugees, giving those with elite potential the chance to participate at the highest level, and importantly, to use their platforms and influence to advocate for increased protection and better opportunities for refugees and other displaced people.

The Coalition is convening a multi-stakeholder reference group and will guide the development of a new joint sports pledge to be announced at the next GRF in December 2023. The co-creation will commence in March 2023 with the first meeting of the reference group in April.

The Coalition called on all stakeholders to be part of the pledge, through which they aim to show that sport is not simply a leisure activity, but rather can form a core part of humanitarian and development programming with strong linkages to inclusion, self-reliance, mental health, and psychosocial support.

Member States were encouraged to consider including sport within their pledges, and stakeholders working on programming and multistakeholder pledges were invited to connect with the Coalition or consider joining the joint sports pledge.

Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) Group of Friends

Ms. Manisha Thomas, Geneva Representative of the Women's Refugee Commission, informed participants that the group has developed [guidance and a tip sheet on AGD](#) and how to make pledges AGD-sensitive and inclusive, and she encouraged stakeholders to use these resources as they develop new pledges.

In the lead-up to the GRF 2023, they will showcase joint AGD pledges in various fora to enhance the integration of AGD in future pledges and processes and promote the inclusion of refugees and access to services and protection. All stakeholders are invited to join the events and the group of friends.

Interventions

- [The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts](#) called for all GRF 2023 pledges to be child-sensitive. Further, they called for actors to join them to make bold pledges focusing on children and children's inclusion in systems at national and local levels to ensure child protection, including from violence, abuse, exploitation, and family separation. They invited all stakeholders to participate in their GRF 2023 roadmap and preparations, which include consultations, meetings and roundtables with children and youth, governments, and other stakeholders.
- The Permanent Mission of Uganda highlighted that, as a large hosting state, they carry a disproportionate burden and have funding shortfalls, leading to refugees having inadequate access to basic resources, including shelter and food. They noted that meeting basic needs is a top priority and called for balanced scales. As a co-convenor, Uganda highlighted that they would focus on a range of thematic areas, namely resilience and self-reliance, climate change, and localisation. In closing, Uganda called upon the matching of pledges to their refugee model to make it sustainable.
- [The Global Refugee-led Network](#) (GRN) recalled how, since 2019, they have brought together hundreds of refugee leaders around the world for regional refugee summits in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. These summits provide opportunities for the refugee community to network, discuss policy priorities, and input into the GCR process. As part of their 2019 pledge, the GRN had planned a series of workshops to build the capacity of refugee leaders for them to engage in policymaking. These trainings have reached hundreds of refugee-led organisations. They highlighted the need to ensure the meaningful participation of refugees at GRF 2023, including calling on all stakeholders to sign up to the multi-stakeholder pledge on meaningful participation; for refugee advisors to be included in national delegations, but also in preparatory meetings, and in the organisation of the GRF; for refugees to be represented on panels; for an increase in financial resources for RLOs and refugees at the Forum; and for invitations to be sent promptly to allow adequate time to secure visas and prepare.
- Oxfam provided an update on their pledges. They have seen great steps forward in meaningful refugee participation since GRF 2019, as stakeholders have increasingly recognised the benefits of greater localisation and the need to keep refugees at the center of discussions that relate to their lives and their futures. COVID-19 provided a clear demonstration of the crucial role of local and refugee-led initiatives, whole-of-society approaches, and partnerships. Oxfam called for States and other stakeholders to design initiatives that systematically include refugee voices and refugee expertise using the steps outlined by GRN.
- The Geneva Cities Hub spoke of the role of cities and municipal authorities in refugee responses, for example in social inclusion, protection, local planning, education, and service provision. With more than 70 per cent of displaced people worldwide seeking refuge in urban areas, the Hub highlighted

how local and regional governments are crucial partners in advancing durable solutions. The Hub called upon States to support and facilitate the participation of local and regional governments in the GRF 2023. Alongside the Global Taskforce on Local and Regional Governments, the Mayor's Mechanism, and others, the Hub issued a joint statement, encouraging States' delegations to ensure the meaningful engagement of local and regional governments in the GRF through several recommendations to be considered, including designing the GRF modalities to allow for local and regional government participation in their own right, distinct from other actors.

- The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in Geneva called for the GRF 2023 to be a vital moment to innovate and expand collective responses to the needs of refugees and the countries that host them. In the coming months, Canada will be developing several areas of focus for pledging, using a whole-of-society approach to refugee protection and assistance. They will provide concrete contributions to refugee responses, including through traditional resettlement, complementary pathways, and humanitarian assistance. Further, they are looking at ways to enhance meaningful refugee participation to improve their responses and contributions and expressed gratitude for the contributions of their refugee advisors. They encouraged other States to include refugee advisors in their delegations and offered to provide advice on how to do so. Canada pointed to the good progress on their pledges, acknowledged that there remains much more to be done, and stated that they will continue to be actively engaged in the GRF over the course of the year.
- UNICEF pointed to the fact that more than 36.5 million children have been displaced by conflict or violence, with displacement disproportionately affecting children, and that 1 million children have been born as refugees since GRF 2019. UNICEF reminded participants that GRF 2023 is an opportunity to ensure that children have support networks, access to education, a home and place to feel safe, and access to health care, protection, and a social safety net that allow them to dream and make plans. They also touched upon gender-based violence, better services for refugee children to improve social cohesion, and inclusion of refugees in national systems, services, and economies. They highlighted their work on specific pledges with the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, and with youth partners such as the Global Refugee Youth Network and the Immigration Youth and Children Platform. UNICEF stated that the success of GRF 2023 depends on establishing meaningful participation of displaced children and young people as the new normal.
- WHO expressed its appreciation for the collaborative efforts with UNHCR to ensure refugees and host communities receive the appropriate levels of health care, in particular mental health and psychosocial support, and highlighted the importance of preparedness and response to future health outbreaks and pandemics. WHO expressed enthusiasm and commitment towards establishing and co-hosting a Group of Friends on Health with UNHCR in preparation for the Global Refugee Forum 2023. The Group of Friends will allow WHO to deepen and broaden engagement in safeguarding refugee health. WHO's Health Emergencies and Migrant Health programme will work with UNHCR on mobilising joint pledges on broadening refugee inclusion in national health systems. As they work on finalising the details of the engagement with UNHCR in March 2023, WHO looks forward to engaging with a wide range of actors to define the goals of the Group of Friends for Health and see how they can collectively position health as a central pillar of the multilateral system's support to refugees and host communities.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Arafat Jamal commended all the examples of the benefits of the multi-stakeholder approach that were presented. More broadly, he highlighted the need for demonstrable progress on responsibility sharing to be shown at the GRF 2023.

To promote all these areas, Mr. Jamal called on everyone to think big and be ambitious, using the multistakeholder approach, as set out in many of the initiatives showcased during the briefing.