

I would like to express my appreciation to be given the opportunity here today to speak on behalf of several stakeholders part of the global legal community.

It is not always obvious why legal aid is so important for refugees. People think of immediate humanitarian needs first such as shelter, food, and medical care. But refugees and other forcibly displaced persons will continue to need humanitarian assistance forever, until and unless a solution can be found to their predicament. That solution will always be found through the law.

PILnet: The Global Network for Public Interest Law together with a large group of partner organizations, have coordinated an effort to mobilize the global legal community in advance to this first ever Global Refugee Forum.

I am extremely delighted to announce a joint pledge entitled “Mobilizing the Global Legal Community to Protect and Find Solutions for Refugees and Others Forcibly Displaced”. Until date, this joint pledge has mobilized 50 civil society actors and also 27 law firms, bar associations and corporations that have committed 125,000 pro bono hours per year.

Together, we have committed to initiate and engage in an ongoing dialogue among the global legal community in order to better leverage material and increased resources, including pro bono hours, that can dramatically increase the number of those who have equal access to justice while contributing to State

capacity; fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity of procedures; and more effective laws, policies, and practices. Furthermore, together we have pledged to coordinate and monitor the impact of such efforts.

We expect these commitments to have profound impact on the lives and futures of refugees around the world. We are proud of the incredible response we have received thus far, but recognise that our work is only just getting started. The process will remain open and I invite everyone part of the legal community to become a part of this pledge to ensure that every refugee has access to a lawyer.