



UNHCR Virtual Briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees and the High-Level Officials Meeting (NYC)

08 September 2021, 16:00-17:30 hours (CET)

Summary of Discussions

Introduction

This virtual informal briefing for Member States and other key stakeholders was an opportunity to provide an update for New York-based interlocutors on preliminary outcomes of the ongoing stocktaking process on the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and overall preparations for the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) that will take place on 14 and 15 December 2021. The event was moderated by Ms. Ruven Menikdiwela, Director of the UNHCR New York Office, with opening remarks by Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in New York followed by Ms Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection.

In framing the session, the moderator, as part of her introductory remarks, reaffirmed the criticality of the briefing in maintaining the momentum around the GCR and GRF processes in light of the growing number of emergencies and people forced from their homes.

Opening remarks

Statement delivered by H.E. Pascale Baeriswyl Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in New York

Ambassador Baeriswyl noted that, as co-host of the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in 2019, Switzerland has worked closely with UNHCR to highlight and to implement the GCR, also assuring Switzerland's support in preparing for the upcoming HLOM. Referring to the most recent events in Afghanistan, she stressed that displacement is and will remain one of the key challenges of our time, with drivers of displacement becoming increasingly complex, spurred by conflict, natural disaster, and/or climate change. The events in Afghanistan, but also the unprecedented level of displacement in Central America further highlight the relevance of regional platforms, such as the SSAR and the MIRPS. These Platforms are proving to be instruments with considerable potential for bringing together a diversity of actors to contribute to specific regional displacement situations. Ambassador Baeriswyl emphasized that further support to these platforms is needed as they adapt their approach in light of the fast-evolving displacement trends we are witnessing in Afghanistan or in Central America. She re-assured that Switzerland will continue to play an active role in both platforms.

Ambassador Baeriswyl then emphasized that the GCR remains an essential beacon for an impactful, sustainable, dignified, and equitable approach to refugee movements. In this context, the stocktaking exercise that is currently ongoing is critical to assess what has already been achieved, to identify where gaps remain and where additional efforts are needed. The High-Level Officials Meeting is therefore a key point in the 2021 agenda, and Switzerland stands ready to play an active role. She mentioned that Switzerland is working in developing new pledges in line with identified gaps and challenges, while also progressing the implementation of pledges made at the 2019 GRF. She referred to the recently launched Geneva Technical Hub, the objective of which is to support UNHCR's technical field operations with a view to strengthening assistance to the forcibly displaced with environmentally sustainable solutions. Switzerland also welcomes the opportunity to build on each other's strengths through a process of matching pledges, with financial, material, and technical support.

Briefing on the GCR and HLOM

Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection

Ms. Triggs provided an update on GCR implementation and preparations for the [HLOM](#). She reminded that the GCR sets out a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing and provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations, development actors, and others to work together to ensure that refugees can lead productive lives and host countries get the support they need. Such efforts to support inclusive approaches in refugee hosting areas, particularly through strengthened development cooperation, can benefit both

refugees and host communities and help to move away from encampment approaches where possible.

She reaffirmed that the GCR aligns with the 2030 agenda and links forced displacement with the Sustainable Development Goals in that it envisions working with the UN system, governments, and partners to include refugees and returnees in planning and policies, including those aimed at achieving the SDGs. It also calls for fostering collaboration with both humanitarian and development actors from the outset of a refugee situation and in protracted refugee situations.

She then outlined how the whole-of society approach, at the heart of the GCR, can also help advance many of the priorities set out in the Common Agenda in that the GCR contains a number of arrangements and tools for mobilizing whole-of-society and multi-stakeholder approaches that are key to new forms of working together and a reinvigorated multilateralism. The GCR also provides avenues for strengthening sustainable funding through an increased focus and opportunities for the engagement of development actors and the private sector. The GCR envisions that refugees, including from an age, gender, diversity perspective, are at the centre of our approaches to ensuring that no one is left behind. The GCR's focus on peacebuilding ensures that people are able to return and rebuild their countries in conditions of safety and dignity and to prevent future conflict.

Ms. Triggs provided an update on the GRF, which yielded a number of initiatives and 1,400 pledges from governments and a range of other stakeholders for financial, technical, material, and policy commitments linked to the GCR objectives. She noted that many major refugee hosting countries made important pledges to include refugees in their national development plans, systems, and services, and development and humanitarian actors committed support that could help to realize them. She stressed that [matching donor support with host country policies](#) for inclusion and protection demonstrates how the GCR can make a difference for refugees and host communities.

Update on GRF Pledge Implementation

Ms. Triggs then gave an update on the implementation of the initiatives and pledges made at the 2019 GRF. She referred to the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular in relation to education, jobs and training, and third-country solutions, but also the admirable adaptation and innovation displayed by many pledging entities determined to demonstrate solidarity with people who are forcibly displaced. She explained that updates had been received in relation to more than 600 pledges and that, of these, 75 per cent are in progress with a further nine per cent in the planning phase. Almost 100 pledges have been fulfilled, and 80 new pledges have been received to date in 2021. There remains scope, however, for further implementation, matching, and concretization of pledges.

In the context of the three Support Platforms, strong progress has been made in their operationalization and mobilization. The Global Compact on Refugees, and its many practical arrangements, such as the support platforms, will be critical to strengthening our response and advancing solutions for refugees, particularly in the light of recent events both in the southeast Asia and the Horn of Africa regions.

She summarized the progress made on the Clean Energy challenge and the Asylum Capacity Support Group and outlined the notable contributions made by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) who stepped up support to host countries. She then called for increased support for host countries, including through the engagement of development actors and inclusion of refugees in national development plans, which will be critical.

Preparations for the High-Level Officials Meeting

Ms. Triggs outlined where things stand in terms of [preparations for the HLOM](#) which will take place in Geneva on 14 and 15 December 2021 to conduct a mid-term review of progress towards the GCR objectives and the implementation of the related pledges and initiatives from the first GRF. She reiterated that the HLOM is opportunity for senior officials, such as heads of departments responsible for refugee matters, to work together to recognize where progress has been made, and to chart the way forward for the future, including with a view to preparing the for the next Global Refugee Forum.

As part of the HLOM, the first GCR indicator report will be launched, which will contribute, together with the analysis of pledge implementation, to the evidence base needed to make this assessment of progress and needs. She explained that much more needs to be done to build and strengthen systems for data collection, noting that, to date, we have data collections systems for only around half of the GCR indicators, and we will have to rely on proxy data to help us assess progress made towards the others. She called on governments and other stakeholders to build and help strengthen the data collection systems needed to tell the story of the Global Compact on Refugees.

High-Level Officials Meeting - Priorities

In relation to the HLOM itself, Ms. Triggs [outlined the three priorities of the meeting](#), including that it will consider how to expand support for refugees and host countries, reflect upon how to advance on the implementation of pledges made at the first GRF, and identify areas in need of further support with a view to preparing pledges for the next forum in 2023. In preparation for this review, regional, stakeholder, and thematic stocktaking events have been conducted around the world throughout 2020 and 2021, the last of which will be on 04 November and focused on statelessness.

Ms. Triggs explained that the outcomes of the various stocktaking events will be brought to the global conversation through a series of virtual preparatory roundtables in November. In addition to the launch of the first GCR indicator report at the first roundtable, which will help to frame the discussions, a series of thematic roundtables are planned focused on financing, partnerships, self-reliance, and solutions.

HLOM Programme

Related to the [programme of the High-Level Officials Meeting](#), the AHC-P briefed that the High-Level Officials Meeting will be preceded by a day of side events for specific stakeholder groups and initiatives set out in the GCR. The HLOM will then be comprised of three panels focusing on the three priorities for the meeting, a general debate, and four spotlight sessions on the role of the GCR in the medium to long-term response to the pandemic, climate action, the three-year strategy on resettlement and complementary pathways, and the support platforms.

Reminding that the Meeting will be held in a hybrid virtual/in-person format over the course of the two days, she reconfirmed her confidence that the momentum and level of ambition will continue.

Discussion and Closing

Following the presentations, interventions from the virtual floor were made expressing support in advancing GCR implementation and in participating in the various events related to the High-Level Officials Meeting.