

Mr. Chair,

It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its 191 National Societies. My name is Tsovinar Khachatryan. I arrived in Denmark as an asylum seeker and have spent 25 years working with Danish Red Cross, currently also as a member of the governing board of DRC. It is a great pleasure to carry on an IFRC tradition that our statements be delivered by people with lived experience, as at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019 and the High-Level Officials Meeting in 2021.

I know firsthand the importance of meaningful participation and inclusion. Too often, those with influence surround themselves with people who look, think and act like them. But it is when people with diverse backgrounds – such as refugees – are engaged, when their perspectives are heard, when their experiences are recognised, that the most effective decisions are made.

Decision-making groups, governance and leadership, need to be as diverse as the people they aim to serve. Refugees and people with lived experience must be actively informed about these spaces, invited to the table and enabled to offer their valuable insights, but also to challenge norms and question decisions.

It is for these same reasons that IFRC calls on to states and other stakeholders to promote the **meaningful participation** of refugees and other displaced people in decision-making processes.

The word meaningful is critical. People who have lived experience must be acknowledged as equals, with individual talents and skills, and as experts, with lived experience of strength, courage and resilience that informs our perspective. Our participation must have purpose, and our input must be truly heard.

IFRC also calls on states and other stakeholders to strengthen recognition and support for **the leadership of local actors** in meeting the needs of refugees and other displaced people.

In refugee responses across the world, local actors, including Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, are the first on the ground and the last to leave. For a truly sustainable response that delivers results for refugees and host communities alike, local leadership is critical.

As we come together for the second Global Refugee Forum, IFRC has three calls to action:

1. The first is that we cannot forget the basics. We must prioritize saving lives and ensuring refugees have access to protection and essential services.
2. The second is to take urgent action to reduce climate related displacement and minimize the impacts of the climate crisis on refugees.
3. The third is to support the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and other displaced people.

To make these calls to action a reality requires urgent action and a willingness to work in genuine partnership with the communities who are most affected and to hold ourselves accountable to them. That is why we are making commitments as part of multistakeholder pledges on the meaningful participation of refugees, advancing localization, climate action, and complementarity between the GCR and GCM.

By working together in the spirit of solidarity envisioned by the Global Compact, we can create a world where refugees live in safety, in dignity, and in peace.

Thank you