



Global Refugee Forum 2023

Summary of the Third Formal Preparatory Meeting

Friday, 1 September 2023, 15:00-18:00 CEST

The third formal preparatory meeting for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) 2023 was held on Friday, 1 September 2023, bringing together States and other stakeholders to share updates and discuss preparations for the GRF 2023. The session was opened by H.E. Julien Thöni, Ambassador, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of the Multilateral Affairs Division, and Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, and Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR, as Co-Hosts of the GRF 2023. Mr. Arafat Jamal, Coordinator for the Global Refugee Forum 2023, UNHCR, presented an update on the pledging process. Ms. Perveen Ali, Senior Policy Advisor and Head of the Global Compact on Refugees Coordination Team, UNHCR, presented an update on the GRF programme. Ms. Anne Keah, Head of Governance Service, UNHCR, provided an update on the protocol and logistics for the GRF 2023.

Opening remarks

H.E. Julien Thöni, Ambassador, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of the Multilateral Affairs Division, and Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

H.E. Ambassador Thöni welcomed the participants and outlined the agenda for the meeting. He reaffirmed Switzerland's continued efforts as co-host to ensure a successful GRF 2023 in the Palexpo and beyond. With less than four months until the event, he emphasized the criticality of the moment to take stock of our collective engagement thus far and the unique opportunity remaining to take steps toward achieving the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). He highlighted the importance of responsibility sharing given that over three-quarters of refugees are hosted in low- or middle-income countries. H.E. Ambassador Thöni referred to Switzerland's potential pledges towards GRF 2023, which will focus on protection, including education in emergency contexts; localization, focusing on active cities' participation; resource mobilisation; durable solutions; and climate action. He drew attention to the Geneva Technical Hub, launched in 2021 to support UNHCR operations with innovative tools for climate action. He announced Switzerland's plans to renew its support and called on other stakeholders to join. Finally, he appealed on all States and stakeholders to strengthen their commitments and pledges as we approach the final stretch towards the GRF, in particular through the multi-stakeholder pledge architecture, in order to deliver on the objectives of the GCR.

Opening remarks

Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR

Ms. Triggs welcomed the group to the third and final formal preparatory meeting for the GRF 2023 and extended her gratitude to H.E. Ambassador Thöni for co-hosting and co-chairing the meeting. Underlining the urgency of the moment, she encouraged all stakeholders to develop and finalize their contributions in the form of truly transformative pledges, which can serve the collective ambition to achieve more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. She noted three key factors that will determine the future success of efforts towards the GCR objectives. First, all States and stakeholders need to step forward with

new, additional, high-quality pledges (whether financial, material or technical). Second, pledges made at the GRF 2019 need to continue to be implemented. Third, sustained engagement through the multi-stakeholder pledges is key to magnifying the impact and solidifying overall resolve. In concluding, Ms. Triggs spoke of the importance of ensuring that all four GCR objectives are advanced, including GCR Objective 4 that focuses on supporting conditions in countries of origin for voluntary return in safety and dignity – referring to multi-stakeholder pledges in this area around peacebuilding and housing, land and property (HLP). She also noted that we are at the halfway mark of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) toward the [2030 Agenda](#), and this is the time to mobilize action towards their achievement, which could be severely undercut if the global forcibly displaced population of 110 million is not included. Lastly, Ms. Triggs said that while the GRF is not a political event, the potential for political mobilization to influence complex, acute, and protracted refugee situations cannot be understated, citing the [Support Platforms](#) as well as regional initiatives to promote inclusion and solutions.

Update on the pledging process for the GRF 2023

Mr. Arafat Jamal, Coordinator for the Global Refugee Forum 2023, UNHCR

Mr. Jamal highlighted that he was encouraged by the ever-growing positive developments in preparations for the GRF 2023 – more and more stakeholders are engaging and mobilizing to join and co-lead diverse initiatives and cultivate truly transformational pledges aligned to the objectives of the GCR. He noted that while this progress is encouraging, much remains to be done against a backdrop of increasing forcible displacement around the world. He shared a non-exhaustive list of examples, noting that [multi-stakeholder pledges](#) can become “mega” pledges with the necessary political will and support arrangements in place. Examples of the pledges include:

- [The economic inclusion and social protection multi-stakeholder pledge](#) towards ensuring that forcibly displaced and stateless people and host community members gain equal access to decent work, training, financial services and social protection through strengthened and inclusive legislative and policy frameworks.
- The UN family is coming together in a show of solidarity to advance refugee inclusion through the [UN Common Pledge 2.0](#) – 38 UNCTs have made specific, measurable commitments, with an expected reach of 25 million forcibly displaced people around the world.
- [The Group of Friends of Health for Refugees and Host Communities](#) is working to mobilise [multi-stakeholder pledges](#) to foster sustainable access to quality health services at all levels, at affordable costs, for refugees and host communities alike to achieve lasting change.
- The [15 by 30 multi-stakeholder pledge](#) aims to increase access to higher education for the forcibly displaced including through support for higher education institutions in refugee-hosting countries.
- [The Climate Action multi-stakeholder pledge](#) continues to gather momentum but is in need of firm leadership. Referring to a recent IMF report, titled [Climate Challenges in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States](#), Mr. Jamal spoke of its compelling and conclusive evidence showing the links between climate change and forced displacement – the need for a “mega” pledge on this topic particularly urgent. A follow-up convening of this pledge group will be held in Geneva on 28 September 2023.
- Pledges on third-country solutions require further support – such as on [resettlement](#) and [family reunification](#), [skills-based complementary pathways](#) for labour mobility and third-country education, [travel documents](#), and [community sponsorships](#).
- The multi-stakeholder pledge on [agriculture, food systems and food security](#) focuses on addressing acute food insecurity, reducing needs for humanitarian assistance, and building the foundations for refugees and other forcibly displaced people to develop their self-reliance.

- An important contribution towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding is the [multi-stakeholder pledge](#) on prevention of the Harmful Impact of Hate Speech, Misinformation, and Disinformation.
- The [Human settlements multi-stakeholder pledge](#) also requires State champions and engagement to capitalize on their unique experiences, expertise and investments. The Governments of Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, and others are already seizing the opportunity to lead the charge in this area, which is most welcome.
- There are multi-stakeholder pledges on regional situations: one of which is on supporting the [Afghanistan situation, with](#) Qatar as new Chair of the SSAR Support Platform; advancing durable solutions in the IGAD region; and renewed commitments by the MIRPS Support Platform.

In concluding, Mr. Jamal noted that announcements by the various multi-stakeholder pledge groups in the run-up to December are expected. While cheered by progress in some areas, Mr. Jamal made a call to action, noting that some multi-stakeholder pledges are still in need of government leadership — which will be a key to their success.

GRF 2023 – Update on the programme

Ms. Perveen Ali, Senior Policy Advisor and Head of the GCR Coordination Team, UNHCR

Ms. Ali opened her remarks by drawing attention to the critical linkage between the multi-stakeholder pledges under development and the design of the GRF 2023 programme. She also introduced an [updated pledges submission form](#), which will be continuously open until and beyond the GRF. The updated form provides an opportunity for a pledging entity to indicate how the individual pledge contributes to multi-stakeholder pledges. In addition, she noted that the GCR Coordination Team will continue to request updates on pledge implementation twice a year.

With regard to the programme for the Forum, Ms. Ali pointed out that the updated version now identifies the key high-level events that will feature in parallel to the plenary sessions each day in the Palexpo. She explained that each plenary session will open with a series of multi-stakeholder pledging announcements, which will be an opportunity for governments and other stakeholders to announce key multi-stakeholder pledges. These will be followed by a resumption of the interventions made from the floor by all Governments and other stakeholders, according to protocol.

Ms. Ali shared that there will be an exhibition space in the Palexpo, a social media zone, a speakers' corner where talks on good practices can be delivered, as well as relevant linked events to be held outside of the Palexpo. On the evening of the 13th of December, the Nansen Refugee Award ceremony and reception would take place at the Palexpo. Ms. Ali encouraged dynamic formats for the high-level events that move away from traditional panels to something a bit more interactive, in order to optimize the limited time available during the three days of the Forum to make space for discussions and announcements of pledges. Lastly, with regard to questions arising on speaking roles, Ms. Ali informed that these are being developed through the multi-stakeholder pledge groups together with governments and partners, and offered that the GCR Coordination Team is available to facilitate such conversations.

Protocol and Logistics Update

Ms. Anne Keah, Head of Governance Service, UNHCR

Ms. Keah presented an overview of protocol and logistics, covering the venue; participation; registration and badging; security, including in relation to the high-level opening; and seating and speaking arrangements (see Annex). She informed that this information would be shared in a note in the coming

weeks. UNHCR would provide a more comprehensive update on protocol and logistics during the last informal briefing scheduled on 17 November 2023.

Venue

- The Global Refugee Forum will take place at the Palexpo exhibition and convention centre, near the airport. The space that we will be using at Palexpo will be converted into a Blue Zone. Only those accredited to the conference may access this space.
- The venue is considerably smaller than the Palais des Nations, including the plenary room, and delegations should aim to prioritize who needs to be there at any given time.
- UNHCR will provide, in due course, a detailed map of the venue, guidance on the best way to get to Palexpo, particularly by public transportation, and parking information. UNHCR will also indicate access points for people with disabilities and invite any participants with specific needs to contact the UNHCR Secretariat in advance for assistance.

Participation

- Participation in the forum is by invitation only. Invitations to States, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations entities and other organizations with standing observer status in the General Assembly have already been transmitted. Invitations for other stakeholder groups are underway, with many having been dispatched already and others in the pipeline.

Registration and badging system

- For registration, UNHCR will be using the online United Nations Indico system. Registration in Indico will be opened in late September, and the link will be shared by email with all invited guests. All participants, including those with a UNOG ID badge, will be required to register in Indico for security reasons.
- As of today, the UNOG Security and Safety Service is moving to a greener and more efficient digital badging solution. In line with this initiative, conference participants will receive a digital badge consisting of their photo, a QR code, and the name and date of the conference.
- Upon completion of the Indico registration form, and once approved by UNHCR, accredited participants will receive their digital badge by email. The digital badge can be downloaded to your mobile device. The concept of the digital badge is similar to a digital airline boarding pass. Participants can also print their digital badge and bring it with them, as the QR code on paper can also be scanned.

Security arrangements, including for the high-level opening

- In order to access the venue, participants will be required to show their digital badge and then pass through x-ray machines.
- There will be multiple x-ray lanes available to facilitate access. These multiple access points will help ensure that participants can pass through the x-ray machines in an efficient and timely manner.
- During the high-level opening, additional security measures will be put in place. This includes restricted access to the plenary room, whereby only those holding a secondary badge will be able to enter the room. The secondary badge will be non-nominative and, thus, interchangeable. This means that delegates can swap places with other members of their delegation at any given time during the opening and share the secondary badge.

- Aside from the co-host and co-convenor States, all other States will receive two secondary badges to enter the plenary during the opening. One secondary badge will be provided to other participants representing an organization in the plenary or attending in their individual capacity.
- Those who are unable to access the plenary room during the high-level opening may view the proceedings from dedicated rooms in another section of the building where it will be livestreamed. As capacity in these rooms will, nevertheless, be limited, delegations are again requested to prioritize who needs to be there in person.

Seating arrangements in plenary room

- The United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees, which calls for a periodic Global Refugee Forum to be convened for all United Nations Member States, together with relevant stakeholders.
- Seating for the Forum will, therefore, be organized accordingly and in line with the seating arrangements for the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.
- After the co-host and co-convenor States, which will be given priority, the first seat will be occupied by North Macedonia and follow in English alphabetical order.
- There will also be a dedicated seating section for special guests and other stakeholders, including representatives of international and UN organizations, academia, city networks, the private sector, organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, religious leaders, sports organizations, refugees, and parliamentary networks.
- Due to the size of the plenary room, seating will be limited. States will be allocated 2 seats per delegation, both at the table. Participants representing an organization in the plenary will have 1 seat per delegation, which will be at the table. This naturally also applies to those attending in their individual capacity. There will be no back seats on the floor.

Speaking arrangements for the plenary

- Registration for the speakers list for the plenary session will open on Monday, 6 November.
- Speaking order will be organized according to protocol, with multi-stakeholder pledging moments interspersed throughout the plenary.
- It will not be possible to accommodate requests from governments for group statements due to the limited time available.
- Please note that delegations will be asked to limit their interventions to 3 minutes.
- For the plenary session, interpretation will be provided in all six UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish).
- For other events running throughout the Forum, interpretation will be provided in English and French, unless otherwise specified.

Other

- The plenary session will be livestreamed on the GRF webpage in order to reach a wider audience.
- There will also be opportunities for media engagement at the Forum, including for representatives with permanent accreditation to UNOG, as well as visiting accredited journalists. More information on access and accreditation for the media will be provided by UNHCR in due course.
- UNHCR is not responsible for visa arrangements. Participants who require a visa to enter Switzerland are responsible for obtaining one prior to departing for Geneva. A link to more information provided by the Swiss Visa Service for International Geneva has been placed on the

GRF webpage for easy access. We will also circulate it by email following this meeting. Please do not hesitate to contact the Swiss Visa Service should you have any questions.

- The Nansen Refugee Award ceremony will take place on the evening of the first day of the Forum. However, a different ticketing system, separate from the GRF plenary badge, will be in place. More information from the Nansen Team will be provided in due course.
- Should any delegate wish to discuss any of these issues in further detail, please feel free to contact bilaterally Ms. Mercedes Jakupi, Sr. Protocol Officer in the Governance Service (jakupi@unhcr.org).

Discussion and interventions

The co-convenor States, Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, the Niger and Uganda, updated on their thematic priorities for the GRF 2023, which included ensuring a whole-of-society approach; inclusion-focused initiatives; peacebuilding; sports; mixed movements; gender equality and protection from gender-based violence; the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; the need to alleviate pressure on host countries; expanding access to third-country solutions; a holistic approach to climate action; and the need for more sustainable financing, such as multi-year financing. Japan announced that it is launching a multi-stakeholder pledge on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and encouraged other States and stakeholders to join, which could also include supporting existing related multistakeholder pledges or making individual contributions towards the nexus. France announced that it is currently considering an initiative linked to refugee women.

Further interventions were made by (in this order) the United States of America, United Kingdom, Qatar, Morocco, Advisory Board to UNHCR led by Displaced and Stateless Persons, Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network, Tertiary Refugee Scholarships Network, National Congress of Ukrainians in Moldova, Gerald Mballe (refugee expert), Australia, Mexico, European Union, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Plan International, Geneva Cities Hub, Danish Refugee Council, Food and Agricultural Organization, Save the Children, Canada, Islamic Republic of Iran, Ecuador, Brazil, Syria, Joint Data Center, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Global Refugee-Led Network, International Labour Organization, Algeria, Germany, Morocco, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Sovereign Order of Malta, and International Organization for Migration.

Below is a summary of select updates, made orally and in submitted statements, on multi-stakeholder pledges under development:

Stakeholder	Announcement
Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN) and Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) joint statement	Announcement of pledges on teaching research and solidarity, inclusion and scholarship programme for refugee women
Aisha Khurram (Refugee Student Leader for the Tertiary Refugee Student Network (TRSN))	Speaking on behalf of the co-leadership group for the pledge on refugee higher education and self-reliance
National Congress of Ukrainians of Moldova (NCUM)	Speaking on behalf of the multi-stakeholder pledge on localization
Gerald Mballe (Refugee expert)	Speaking on behalf of the multi-stakeholder pledge on sports
United States of America	Priority focus on innovative financing and solutions; intervention on the multi-stakeholder pledge on economic inclusion and social protection

United Kingdom	Intervention on pledge priority areas and multi-stakeholder engagement in education, protection from gender-based violence; tackling climate change; and meaningful refugee participation
Morocco	Update on group of friends on health and the emerging multi-stakeholder pledge
Qatar	Update on SSAR Support Platform and multi-stakeholder pledge for Afghanistan Situation
Australia	Update on Friends of Resettlement working group, focus areas on labour mobility and meaningful refugee participation
Danish Refugee Council	On behalf of legal community multi-stakeholder pledge
FAO	On behalf of multi-stakeholder pledge on agriculture, food systems and food security
Geneva Cities Hub	Update on call to local action for migrants and refugees
Plan International	Joint NGO Statement
Save the Children	On behalf of the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts
World Bank - UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement	On behalf of the multi-stakeholder pledge on inclusion in national statistical systems and surveys

Ms. Triggs took note of all the interventions and responded as follows, with complementary interventions from Mr. Jamal and Ms. Ali:

- Thanks to H.E. Ambassador Thöni for his support for the GCR and the initiatives to give it real meaning, noting that such support from Switzerland is encouraging to everyone at UNHCR.
- Underfunding of the protection provided by host countries is a core point to be remembered. Support in various ways is important – technical, material and financial. The core ambition of the GCR is to ensure that countries with more resources or stakeholders with more resources can support the countries that are providing protection.
- Many interventions touched on meaningful refugee participation at the GRF 2023: A diligent selection process was developed to ensure 150 seats in plenary for refugees (including 50 refugee-led organizations), representing a broad range of skills, geographical coverage and experience.
- There is strong support for the concept of matching. Matching is key to helping countries implement inclusive policy pledges.
- There is strong support for the concept of mega pledges, given the multidimensionality and the plurality of actors needed to achieve a single objective together. These are expected to yield a significant impact and transformational, which will make a difference.
- There was broad agreement on the importance of sustainable voluntary return – one of the objectives of the GCR. Refugees want to return home and need to be able to do so in dignity and safety. Everyone recognizes this as important, but this requires greater focus and support.
- Localization was mentioned in many interventions, as was climate. Displacement linked to climate change and disasters is a priority for many countries. Leadership on this question is enormously important. Relatedly, gathering accurate data to enable better advocacy is crucial, including the need to include refugees in national statistical systems.
- Acknowledgement of Greece's particular work on unaccompanied minors – hence the importance of pledging at the GRF.
- Regarding the GRF 2023 outcome document, it was explained that there will not be a negotiated outcome document but rather a co-hosts and co-convenors' summary that will be presented at the conclusion of the GRF.

- With regard to the issue of trafficking, UNHCR is working with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons to promote a pledge, and we encourage Governments interested in contributing to join and potentially co-lead this pledge.
- Save-the-date announcements were made for the 18 October 2023 informal briefing on the GRF 2023, and 17 November 2023 launch of the GCR Indicator Report and briefing on the GRF protocol and programme.
- The UNHCR GCR Coordination Team remains ready to support –if there is an interest in participating in an event, it is encouraged that this be coupled with engagement in supporting the multi-stakeholder pledges.