

First formal consultation on the global compact on refugees – Agenda Item One

Statement by the Government of Canada

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We would like to thank UNHCR and everyone involved in producing the zero draft. The co-chair reminded us of what is at stake here.

We would like to begin by emphasizing the immense opportunity that this process presents to all of us. In developing the Programme of Action, we have an opportunity to work together to strengthen the current international refugee response system, which is both a shared global interest and a shared international responsibility. This Compact and its application should represent an important step forward in mobilizing political will, better fulfilling our shared commitments, and building greater stability and international solidarity.

We believe that this initial draft is a constructive start and offer the following comments:

We recommend a stronger use of intentional language and further efforts to ensure that the Programme of Action aligns with the commitments all states made within Annex 1 of the New York Declaration. The Programme of Action should also clearly reaffirm the **international legal obligations and the norms** that are foundational to the refugee protection regime, including the principles of international solidarity and cooperation, non-refoulement and the right to asylum. These norms are a vital driving force for the programme of action and should feature prominently in the main text of the Global Compact.

We would also recommend that UNHCR considers how they can include indicators by which to assess progress and increase accountability within the various sections of the Programme of Action.

We believe that **the participation of refugees and host communities** in various components of the Programme of Action should be made more concrete and meaningful, including within the Follow-up Arrangements. The Programme of Action should also highlight that refugees can make net social and economic contributions to their communities and countries.

We are pleased to see a **strong emphasis on gender and children and youth** throughout the draft, as well as the overarching emphasis on an age, gender and diversity approach. We support strengthening considerations in the draft with respect to diversity, disability, and the elderly. I believe we can all agree that “one size does not fit all” within refugee responses, and we need to respond better to particular needs and imbalances in terms of opportunities. Doing so is both a human rights imperative, but also an approach that will yield significant developmental gains.

We believe that strengthening considerations with respect to diversity, disability and the elderly could be done alongside consideration of **the participation of refugees and host communities**, consistent with commitments made by UNHCR and many of their key partners to improve accountability to affected populations.

In terms of the creation of a global platform, we believe that this platform could play a key role in facilitating more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing. This said, we need to more clearly define, within the Programme of Action, the gap that this Platform is meant to address as well as its objective, composition and function, and we look forward to being involved in discussions to refine this initiative.

The Programme of Action focuses heavily on mobilizing resources and operational components that should be part of comprehensive refugee responses. The factors listed in paragraph 2 of the introduction of the zero draft are critically important and we suggest including the **mobilization of political will and of political engagement** to the list. We believe that political will and engagement are critical to the achievement of comprehensive refugee responses, solutions, and addressing root causes.