



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED
AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

ICVA Guidelines for NGO Statements to UNHCR Governing Bodies

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These (non-binding) guidelines are intended for NGOs volunteering to lead the drafting of an NGO statement to meetings of UNHCR's Executive and Standing Committees. A separate document outlines the drafting procedures for the broader NGO community.

I. STYLE AND CONTENT

NGO statements are important because they often provide a view that neither States nor UNHCR are able to articulate. The primary goal of a statement is to ensure that NGO thinking and views are heard in governmental debates. As such, they offer a "reality-check" based on field-based data and other practical experiences.

The ultimate goal of the statements is to raise issues of concern about particular refugee/IDP/stateless situations and to push UNHCR and States to provide better protection, assistance and durable solutions. This is in line with ICVA's mission for a more principled and effective humanitarian response.

Your statement should be directed at members of your audience: the Member States and the UNHCR. While noting that it is States that decide on the mandate and capability of the UNHCR, NGOs can always (rightly) wonder about UNHCR's position on difficult issues and dilemmas that it faces in its relations with the Member States.

Statements should focus on clear policy messages and convey such messages in a critical, but constructive way. The statements should not only identify problem areas for attention, but also provide specific recommendations for action. Since the NGO strength is to be direct and concrete about issues and countries, they should provide concrete cases and/or provide evidence of violations of rights to support the policy messages. However, NGO statements should avoid being simply descriptions of country situations, since the audience is generally well-informed about most refugee situations, -- there may, of course, be "forgotten" refugee populations, which NGOs should bring to the international attention. NGOs should not repeat information that can already be found in the public domain, UNHCR documents and other.

While consensus is preferable, NGO statements should not settle for the lowest common denominator. However, in order to raise an issue there should be several NGOs that have similar information, views, and positions.

Lead drafters in particular should also make an effort to link statements to previous statements and other relevant discussions, including, eg., regional recommendations from the Annual UNHCR-NGO Consultations for regional statements at March Standing Committees.

II. PROCESS

NGOs leading the drafting should be supported by all other NGOs and networks with input on specific areas they work in, both thematically and geographically. ICVA will also play a

proactive role in soliciting input. Ideally, the lead drafter would use bits of input from a large number of NGOs to shape coherent and well-supported policy messages.

The usual timeline for the drafting process can be found in the NGO Statement Drafting Procedure document that accompanies these guidelines.

NGOs will strive for consensus in the statement drafting process, but without settling for the lowest common denominator. As a last resort, NGOs may disassociate themselves from a particular statement or section of a statement. Such disassociation will be referred to, anonymously, when reading the statement and in the opening paragraph as follows: *One (two; a number of; a significant number of) NGO(s) disagree(s) with the content of this statement (paragraph(s) x of this statement) and wish(es) to be disassociated from the content.* This option has not been used to date, but could be considered in extraordinary circumstances only as a last resort.

III. FORMAT

Length

Statements should not be longer than two pages (800-1,000 words each), keeping in mind that they must not take any longer than 7 minutes to deliver. In cases where it is not possible to agree on a two page statement, a longer written submissions can be considered, on which the shorter oral presentation will be based. The shorter version will be heard by the participants in the meeting, while the longer version will be posted on ICVA's website.

Language

English (UK) is the language used for most NGO Statements. French or Spanish are also possible, but are generally only practical in discussions on regional situations.

Who Delivers the Statement

Generally, the NGO(s) that have taken the lead in drafting should also be delivering the statement. If these NGOs are unavailable, ICVA will recruit another NGO representative who may be participating in the meet. When possible, a refugee, stateless person, IDP or other person or concern to UNHCR could also deliver an NGO statement.