

NGO Statement on Oral Update on ExCom Conclusion

Dear Chair, dear distinguished delegates,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

Strong commitments were made to support durable solutions at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), and the ExCom Conclusion is a welcome opportunity to sustain that momentum.

On voluntary repatriation, we stress that this durable solution must be voluntary and call for the ExCom Conclusion to nuance the affirmation that voluntary repatriation is 'the preferred durable solution' – it may not always reflect aspirations and undercuts political will for other solutions.

On local integration, this solution is hampered by four factors: lack of national political will, insufficient international funding, complexities in measuring refugee integration and lack of guidance. NGOs call on the ExCom Conclusion to tackle these challenges, allowing for increased relevance.

On resettlement, we urge States to maintain and expand current resettlement programmes, and for new programmes to be established.

- NGOs commend those States that ensure their resettlement programs are truly protection-focused and align with UNHCR's resettlement priorities, we ask all States to eliminate restrictive selection criteria.

On family reunification, it should be recognised as a right for all. It is crucial for States to implement all possible policy changes, administrative leniencies, and procedural flexibilities to support exit and entry and effective access to family reunification, especially for unaccompanied and separated children.

On complementary pathways, they are a progressive approach to solutions and should be additional to resettlement, responsive to international protection needs and support access to rights and services. NGOs emphasize the following towards the success of complementary pathways:

Firstly, greater investment in host country contexts can unlock opportunities. Self-reliance programmes allow refugees to contribute to host communities and pursue complementary pathways. Development actors should be included and the private sector, both as employers and advocates, in developing self-reliance activities together with local actors. Host community members can also participate and benefit, and local expertise be leveraged through trust-based partnerships with NGOs and RLOs.

Secondly, providing education not only empowers refugees but also contributes to the socio-economic development of host communities. Through education and skilling, barriers are reduced. We call on States and donors to fund education of refugee children and youth in first asylum countries, including temporary solutions, such as apprenticeships, technical and vocational education, and training (TVET), and digital/remote livelihoods opportunities.

Thirdly, by engaging with governments and private companies in labour mobility, we can build business cases for global market demand. Private companies can offer financial assistance to refugees to cover relocation and settlement expenses.

Fourthly, we recognize the need for flexible and inclusive policies that consider the diverse linguistic backgrounds of refugees. We advocate for more accessible language testing options to ensure that language requirements do not serve as barriers to refugees reaching a solution.

NGOs would like to draw attention to the following cross cutting issues for durable solutions and complementary pathways:

- Age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming, and equity are essential for ensuring equal opportunities and rights. This can be achieved by incorporating age, gender and diversity perspectives in policies and practices. Data collection that explores intersectionality is encouraged, to inform inclusive programming tailored to diverse needs.
- Mental health and psychosocial support should be prioritized as it is crucial for the well-being and resilience of refugees.
- Multi-sector collaboration towards achieving durable solutions, such as Education, Protection and Livelihoods, align resources, ideas, and advocacy initiatives, all serving the best interest of refugees, along all trajectories of displacement. These should be promoted.

Finally, through meaningful refugee participation and leadership we can uphold principles of inclusion and equity for displaced and stateless people and advance solutions with direct input and guidance from those with lived experience.

We stand ready to support and collaborate with UNHCR and governments to put these recommendations into action.

Thank you.