

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (ExCom)
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NGO Collective Statement – International Protection

Dear Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

We are at a critical juncture in global history. Conflicts are raging in different regions of the world, to which the multilateral system is struggling to respond. The failure to find peaceful solutions at the political level is pushing humanitarian responses to their limits, against a backdrop of ever-growing needs, and insufficient funding. In addition, we are seeing widespread disregard for international humanitarian law, compounded by impunity for gross violations of human rights that are taking place in many conflicts. This failure means that millions of people are being forcibly displaced both inside and outside their countries. With forced displacement reaching unprecedented levels across the globe, myriad, urgent international protection issues continue to arise at regional and country levels.

However, conflict is not the only threat to the lives of displaced people who flee their homes in search of safety. The global rise of 'anti-migrant' nationalistic discourse, hate speech and misinformation is fueling the rise in xenophobia. Not only does it increase the risks of violence against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, but also threatens their lives and livelihoods as a whole.

We are gravely concerned about the rise of policies to externalise responsibility for the protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Practices that shift burdens, avoid responsibility, or frustrate access to international protection are inconsistent with global solidarity and responsibility sharing.

With the current scale of conflicts, internal displacement has reached a historical high in 2023. Hence, it is more crucial than ever to build on recent efforts to improve protection for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and find durable solutions to the plight of those forced to move. We welcome recent efforts by the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) to revise its IDP policy to ensure it is fit for purpose for the protection challenges that IDPs face. We also welcome the work of the outgoing Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, Mr. Piper, in mobilizing key actors to ensure IDPs find durable solutions for their situation.

However, nearly five years after the establishment of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, we remain concerned if the multilateral system will effectively build upon this work at the political and operational level to ensure the rights of IDPs in all their diversity. Member States have a critical role to play, to ensure the implementation of both initiatives at the political and practical levels, ensuring accountability and resources and sustaining the necessary attention to the global issue of internal displacement.

This statement comes at a critical time as stateless communities and those impacted by discriminatory nationality laws are increasingly suffering human rights, international humanitarian and international criminal law abuses, devastating lives and communities across all regions. Statelessness is often caused and perpetuated by discrimination, and stateless people are vulnerable to many forms of discrimination, persecution and abuse. Effectively addressing statelessness through promoting the right to nationality for all, as well as equal rights for all regardless of legal status, is one of the core challenges of our time. We urge States to treat this global challenge with the urgency, political commitment and resource allocation it demands, while centring stateless people and their communities as the true experts who understand what solutions they need.

While important progress has been made over the course of UNHCR's decade-long #IBelong campaign, many challenges and gaps remain as this draws to an end this year. The launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness this week will provide an important platform to help achieve this

and we would encourage all States, regional institutions and UN agencies to engage, as well as UNHCR to allocate sufficient resourcing to help support and direct these efforts.

Against this backdrop, we continue to operate in an increasingly challenging and constrained environment. On the one side, calls to prioritize, be more efficient and better focus our responses, have not been matched with increased financial support. According to the last [Global Humanitarian Overview Funding Update](#), humanitarian funding saw a decrease of 12 per cent compared to what was recorded last year at the same time. This situation has left many of our organizations, particularly local actors, stretched and increasingly lower capacity to fully serve those in need.

In addition, we are also facing criminalization of NGOs, increased bureaucracy, shrinking civic space and hostile political discourses which make the provision of essential services for displaced populations ever more challenging. We acknowledge that those challenges are worse for local NGOs and refugee rights activists who many times are on the frontline of responses. Therefore, we call upon States to ensure space for civil society, local actors and NGOs so we can effectively contribute to the protection of displaced populations. Moreover, where civic space is shrinking and where humanitarian workers operate in restricted and dangerous spaces, support for civil society and local organizations must be ensured: the international community should never leave these local and international civil society actors on their own.

Governments should also come up with strategies to counter the rise of discriminatory, xenophobic and hate speech aimed at the displaced population globally. Nations that are actively developing and promoting these laws nationally should be identified, and such practices monitored to ensure displaced people in such spaces are protected and a lasting solution is found, and that social cohesion is promoted.

We believe that it is not possible to achieve effective protection if inequalities in accessing services based on age, gender and diversity are not addressed. Often, the most marginalized populations bear the burden of responses that are not tailored to include them. AGD blind responses not only perpetuate inequality but are also less efficient as they fail to reach large portions of the displaced population, most of them in great need of protection.

Therefore, we call upon states to ensure they revise and support policies for protecting displaced people, so they are adapted to address the specific needs of children, women and girls, older people with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

We also believe that humanitarian actors and member states must continue the push for the participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in all their diversity. **First**, by including refugee-led and forcibly displaced women-led, disability-led and youth-led organizations, among others, as equal partners in refugee responses by properly resourcing them, ensuring better partnership agreements and supporting their participation in key decision-making spaces.

Second, ensure proper accountability to displaced populations by opening spaces and providing the necessary support at the community level so that all groups of displaced people can have a voice. Governments with support from NGOs, UN agencies and the international community must act upon their requests and ensure proper feedback is provided on how they are implementing on their obligations and commitments.

We will continue to call for reinforcing the normative frameworks and institutional practices that already exist, especially of and by States, to guarantee the equal protection of all asylum seekers and all other forcibly displaced people seeking international protection and humanitarian assistance. NGOs urge UNHCR to act as a “*strong, principled and persuasive advocate for the rights and needs of forcibly displaced people and of stateless persons*” and call on Member States to afford newly arriving refugees and asylum-seekers from all countries of origin in a similar manner, and to provide legal status appropriately with clear rights attached.

States should continue investing in addressing root causes of communal violence and armed conflicts, and peace talks and negotiations should ensure active participation of refugees and other displaced populations.

In conclusion, the challenges we face in ensuring the protection of displaced populations are immense and multifaceted. The growing complexities of global displacement require not only increased funding but also political will, solidarity, and a commitment to uphold the rights and dignity of all displaced individuals. By prioritizing inclusive, equitable, and accountable approaches, we can create a future where displaced people are not merely surviving but are empowered to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

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

Thank you.