

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
65th Session
29 September – 3 October 2014

**NGO General Debate Statement
Agenda Item 4**

Mister Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of non-governmental organizations. It has been drafted in consultation with, and aims to reflect the diversity of views of, the NGO community.

We focus today on the top ten actionable items we feel require the immediate attention of UNHCR and Member States:

First, it is crucial for States and UNHCR alike to encourage and facilitate the leadership and participation of women and girl refugees. We are concerned that displacement serves to exacerbate existing inequalities, discrimination and hardship faced by refugee women and girls. We draw attention to the 10 core protection areas identified by displaced women who participated in the Regional Dialogues with Refugee Women in 2011. These build on the existing 2001 Five Commitments to Refugee Women and are the key to sustainable, effective protection. To ensure full implementation of these ten protection areas, we urge UNHCR and States to put in place **time-bound action plans with measurable goals and regular reporting.** NGOs stand ready to be strong and active partners in achieving these goals.

Second, for refugees stuck in protracted situations we urge states and international actors to give fresh priority to promoting genuine self-reliance and human rights. The number of forcibly displaced persons has reached an all-time high, while protracted situations continue to lengthen in duration. Opportunities that build self-reliance enable refugees to not only personally benefit, but also grow local economies and autonomously unlock solutions for themselves and their hosts.

Third, we urge States to ensure international protection for those fleeing across any border, both by providing effective access to territory and by adhering to the principle of non-refoulement. We urge governments to widen access to short-and long-term refuge for those fleeing conflict and environmental disaster. Together with the lock-down of borders, the lack of safe channels for those forced to flee is funneling refugees to death on land and sea crossings. And so many are dying: IOM confirms that more than 3,000 people have died this year alone in the Mediterranean Sea. An increasing percentage are refugees--from Syria, Gaza and Iraq as well as from Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. NGOs urge UNHCR and states to explore and collaborate on safe channels instead of dangerous funnels.

Fourth, we call on UNHCR and States to better support refugees and displaced persons living in urban areas and other non-camp settings. Data shows that two thirds of all refugees live outside of formal camp structures. The refugee response community is urged to strengthen outreach, facilitate access to services, promote self-reliance among urban refugee populations, and expand international support to public services in host countries. We appreciate the work of the UNHCR-NGO Urban Task team in sharing best practices and encourage ExCom members to attend our Friday afternoon side event on alternatives to camps.

Fifth, we encourage UNHCR and States to promote legal frameworks, policies, funding, and coordination for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Despite the reforms launched in 2005, we have yet to enjoy a humanitarian system that consistently provides robust responses to internal displacement from conflicts and natural disasters. The December 2013 High Commissioner's Dialogue on IDPs was a step in the right direction, particularly to advance two priorities: the implementation of the Kampala Convention and the Secretary General's Durable Solutions Framework. The next round of UNHCR COP planning and budget discussions will provide an opportunity to promote adequate and predictable coverage for IDPs.

Sixth, we urge all States to refrain from arbitrary detention. Asylum and migration-related detention is on the rise. Detention harms the health and well-being of those affected, particularly children and families, and infringes on their human rights. UNHCR should continue to advocate for states to implement alternatives to detention. UNHCR's October 2012 Detention Guidelines should be implemented in practice. NGOs already collaborate with governments on these alternatives and stand ready to expand that collaboration.

Seventh, we urge UNHCR and Member States to better support host communities. We have seen in the past, for example with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, that the pursuit of durable solutions for refugees suffers when tensions with host communities are not addressed. A far more substantial and coherent strategy is needed to address host communities, including the involvement of development actors, financial institutions, and the private sector.

Eighth, we urge UNHCR and Member States to maintain their commitment to Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD)-sensitive programming. We hope UNHCR's new policy on community-based protection will improve UNHCR's engagement with affected populations. More should be done to improve prevention and response programming, meet established minimum standards, and ensure that the voices of women, children, adolescents, older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTI individuals, and minority groups are heard.

Ninth, we encourage UNHCR and Member States to more systematically support local partner capacity development. We note that national NGOs are particularly impacted by UNHCR's unpredictable funding availability. National and local NGOs are present before, during and after a humanitarian crisis. They can often provide good services at low cost, but may need help to become familiar and comply with increasing reporting and other administrative requirements. We look forward to working with UNHCR in the coming months to develop an institutional strategy for capacity

strengthening.

Finally, we continue to encourage UNHCR, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, and NGOs to strengthen their application of the Principles of Partnership in their daily interactions with one another. This can be enhanced in the coming year with continued field rollout of the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue, training on the updated Framework for Implementing with Partners, NGO involvement in the Solutions Alliance, and work associated with the High Commissioner's Dialogues on Faith, IDPs and Protection at Sea. All of these initiatives require time, patience, good communication, resources, and long-term commitment.

We look forward to monitoring progress in the future.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.