



1st Formal Preparatory Meeting for Global Refugee Forum 2023

Summary

2 February 2023, 15:00-18:00 hrs CET

The first formal preparatory meeting for the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) 2023 was held on Thursday, 2 February 2023, bringing together States and other stakeholders to provide an update and discuss on the preparations for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF). The session, moderated by Ms. Anne Keah, Head of the Governance Service, was opened by H.E. Felix Bauman, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland as a co-host for the GRF 2023 and Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at UNHCR. Mr. Arafat Jamal, the newly appointed Coordinator for the GRF 2023, UNHCR, then remarked on the political engagement for the GRF, and Ms. Perveen Ali, Head of the GCR Coordination Team, UNHCR, provided an update on GRF preparations and key considerations for the programme. During the discussion that followed, Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, Niger, and Uganda made individual statements as GRF 2023 co-convenors, followed by interventions from other States and stakeholders.

Welcome Remarks by H.E. Felix Bauman, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland

Ambassador Bauman, as co-host for GRF 2023, welcomed the participants and expressed the full commitment of Switzerland towards a successful GRF. He recognized the participation of over 3,000 participants from more than 150 countries and various actors from different sectors, including refugees themselves in the first GRF in 2019, and highlighted Geneva's long history of welcoming refugees, who subsequently contributed to its prosperity.

Ambassador Bauman emphasized the need for more to be done to support host countries to include refugees into their socioeconomic systems based on the principle of burden and responsibility sharing, through broadening the base of support from development and peace actors – a key area for engagement highlighted at the recent High Commissioner's Dialogue.

Ambassador Bauman referred to the national process that was launched by Switzerland to ensure a whole-of-society approach and encouraged other States to follow suit. He underscored the importance of working together in close coordination through various initiatives, such as the UN Common Pledge 2.0.

Opening Remarks by Ms. Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, UNHCR

Ms. Triggs thanked Switzerland as a GRF co-host and welcomed the participants and introduced Mr. Arafat Jamal, who was recently appointed as Coordinator for the GRF 2023. She also emphasized the need to create buzz, energy, new ideas, and initiatives around the next GRF to demonstrate the impact of the GCR, and underlined the important political mobilization roles being played by the co-host (Switzerland) and co-convenors (Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan, Niger, and Uganda).

Ms. Triggs recalled the unprecedented humanitarian crises of global forced displacement and their scale and complexity with over 103 million displaced, and expressed UNHCR's full commitment to the [Global Compact on Refugees](#) (GCR), which provides the way forward, to ensure equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility in the face of these challenges.

Ms. Triggs also emphasized the whole-of-society approach, which is a key element of the GCR that involves parliamentarians, academics, cities and local governments, NGOs, refugee-led organizations, development banks, private sector, faith-based groups, and others to play complementary roles in responses to forced displacement. She further welcomed both the United States of America's launch of Welcome Corps for sponsorship of refugees and joined-up response in Moldova by faith-based groups from around the world.

Finally, Ms. Triggs underlined the importance of implementing the current GRF pledges and ensuring new pledges are of high-quality, additional, quantifiable, and needs-driven to ensure effective implementation and facilitating matching to enable necessary support and skills to host countries to give effect to their policy pledges.

Political Engagement for the Global Refugee Forum

Mr. Arafat Jamal, as the Coordinator for GRF 2023, recalled from his previous role as UNHCR Representative for South Sudan the importance of the political engagement for the GRF to advance the arrangements for burden and responsibility sharing in displacement contexts, including through the regional Support Platforms and other national and regional arrangements.

Mr. Arafat underscored that the implementation of current pledges should continue while new pledges are developed and matched with host countries' policy commitments. These new pledges should ease pressures on host countries, enhance refugees' self-reliance through increased social and economic inclusion, and expand opportunities for solutions, including resettlement and complementary pathway, local integration, voluntary return, and peace building.

Mr. Arafat encouraged all States to develop whole-of-country pledges to bring together various actors from diverse sectors towards common objectives. Broadening the base of support is particularly important to further expand the role of the private sector while ensuring meaningful refugee participation and close engagement of other non-governmental partners. Various events planned for this year, such as the G7, G20, SDG Summit, COP28, are important opportunities for including messaging on their links to displacement and the role of the GCR in the lead-up to the GRF.

Roadmap and Key Considerations for the Programme

Ms. Perveen Ali, Head of the GCR Coordination Team, presented a roadmap for the GRF 2023 and key considerations for the programme, which will be co-shaped based on the inputs and feedback received at this and future Formal Preparatory Meetings. She recalled the purpose of the GRF as outlined in the GCR to focus on stocktaking, pledging, and learning in support of comprehensive responses and ultimately the [GCR objectives](#). The GRF will provide opportunities to stocktake on the progress towards the four GCR objectives, including through pledge reporting and the GCR indicator report; implement current pledges and develop new ones jointly that are high-quality and pre-matched in support of the [20 recommendations from the High-Level Officials Meeting](#); and share good practices, opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned to inform future action. All of these are undergirded by the multi-stakeholder and partnership approach and meaningful refugee participation.

Ms. Ali highlighted the need for building and strengthening multistakeholder support to host countries, so that their policy commitments can be supported and implemented, and more solutions can be achieved. Some 1,700 pledges were made since the 2019 GRF, and nearly 50 [GCR initiatives](#) have been launched. Stakeholders are encouraged to continue to implement and report on the progress and to engage in the GCR initiatives, which facilitates the multistakeholder and partnership approach for pledge development and implementation.

Ms. Ali emphasized the importance of strengthening development cooperation and inclusion of refugees in national data systems while noting the progress being made on tracking of financing for refugee hosting countries, including by the OECD's DAC Committee, noting the OECD's key role in facilitating comprehensive reporting on financing for refugee situations for the next GCR Indicator Report. She also referred to the [Pledge Matching Portal](#), as well as multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms for the next GRF, including for example the NGO Reference Group as well as the Advisory Board of Displace and Stateless People.

Ms. Ali underlined the importance of high-level participation and political commitment by States, noting that GRF plenary will be from 13-15th December with the 12th of December being the advance day for side events. The GRF ecosystem is being developed to creatively utilize the spaces available in Geneva to ensure cohesiveness with the plenaries and events surrounding the GRF.

Interventions from the Floor

The co-convenor countries made statements outlining their aspirations, ambitions, and priorities for the 2023 GRF. There was a broad commitment towards strengthening burden and responsibilities sharing and the multi-stakeholder and partnership approach. There was a call to make commitments that are concrete, tangible, and measurable. The co-convenors noted key areas for engagement, such as flexible and multi-year financing, inclusion and development assistance, matching and support for host country policy pledges, mobilizing the private sector, climate and clean energy, solutions (including addressing root causes and peacebuilding), food security, and asylum capacity.

Further interventions were made by Australia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Germany, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Sudan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the European Union, IFRC, the Geneva Cities Hub, the Advisory Board of Displaced and Stateless People, on behalf of NGOs, the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network, and the United Kingdom Global Refugee Network. Interventions addressed the following themes:

- Member States are encouraged to develop GRF strategies, increase pledge matching, and actively participate in the GRF meetings and processes to ensure GRF is a success.
- Working to better translate the GRF process at regional, national levels is paramount.
- The record number of persons with needs of international protection mostly as a result from the exacerbating conflicts and climate change.
- Reconfirmed the importance of reinforcing the principle of burden and responsibility sharing as a collective accountability to effectively respond to the global crises while ensuring that no one is left behind, including by looking into engaging middle countries, innovative financing (including financial institutions and development banks), and broadening resettlement opportunities and other complementary pathways.
- Emphasized the importance of the continued implementation of existing pledges to ensure that gains and gaps are tangible and build confidence on the upcoming GRF and new tailored pledges that are additional, quantifiable, impactful, pre-matched, and coordinated.
- Shared value in conducting broad internal review of pledges made in 2019 or inter-agency consultation processes to define new areas of opportunity.
- Suggested to leverage the development in strengthening protection and most importantly developments in peacebuilding and the creation of conducive conditions for dignified return and reintegration.
- Noted the importance of working with other stakeholders under the leadership of the initiatives and called for mobilizing the initiatives to make the GRF successful.
- Referenced the GCR and GRF process as an important multistakeholder vehicle of action in global displacement. Close coordination with national authorities will be key.

- Reconfirmed the importance of remaining evidence-based in the GCR indicator's report.
- Expressed hope that the next GRF will move the needle on durable solutions, especially in the area of voluntary repatriation, resettlement, addressing root causes.
- Called for strengthening meaningful participation of refugees, including children and refugee-led organizations (local and global) to ensure they are engaged and included as experts and advisors throughout the GRF process (local, regional, and global level).
- Suggested that local governments be part of the GRF alongside States, civil societies, refugees, the private sector, and others to share their experiences, good practices, local solutions, needs, and challenges.
- Suggested increasing the financial flexible resources dedicated to supporting the participation and the preparedness of refugee-led organizations and refugee participants in the GRF.
- Noted the important of taking a needs-based approach and to enhance the integration of AGD approach in all GRF pledges to promote refugee's access to services and protection regardless of age, gender, and diversity.
- Expressed hope to see high-level participation at the upcoming GRF.
- Suggested to continue sharing good practices to cross-fertilize and benefit from exchanges.
- Inquired about the matching process and how UNHCR anticipates its role in facilitating the matching.

UNHCR took note of all the interventions and responded as follows:

- Several priorities have been identified by governments and other stakeholders' groups already, e.g durable solutions (including third-country solutions) and complementary pathways, peace, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and climate change as a multiplier and driver of displacement either within countries or across borders. It would be key to continue sharing plans for pledging in these areas in the coming months so that it helps other stakeholders in finding key entry points for collaboration.
- Requested that the complementary pathways facilitated through private sector engagement and special national arrangements are additional to existing resettlement programmes.
- Underlined that the pledging guidance and the recommendations from the High-level Officials Meeting in 2021 should serve as the framework for pledge development moving ahead.
- UNHCR will use the opportunity with the release of the indicator report in November to see where progress has been made and what more is needed in the coming years.
- Highlighted the need to ensure comprehensive refugee responses are mobilized in a coordinated multi-stakeholder manner.
- Invited the participants to visit the digital platform for the GRC to find out about the different GCR initiatives. A request for expressions of interest was launched last spring and continues to remain open, whereby governments and other stakeholders can indicate which thematic areas they are interested in working on pledges. UNHCR plays a facilitative role connecting interested States and other stakeholders with the relevant initiatives. UNHCR is also using the informal briefings (first one in March) as an opportunity for initiatives that have developed identified pledging priorities, to share their roadmap for the GRF, so that everyone can see what the entry points are for collaboration and support.
- Invited the participants to visit the pledge matching portal on the digital platform for the GCR. The pledge matching portal serves as a first step in identify where financial, technical, and material support is needed to fulfill a policy pledge, and stakeholders can also indicate their interest on the pledges they would like to support. Pledges can be sorted on the portal by region, country, or theme, which helps partners identify their interests.
- Highlighted the need to strengthen engagement on development cooperation, including through creating dedicated financing windows for refugee hosting communities or other kinds of financing mechanisms, supporting the implementation of the host country policy pledges.
- Underscored the need to work towards strengthening meaningful participation of refugees and refugee-led organizations at the upcoming GRF.

- Noted the need to get the invitations out in advance to ensure capitals can prepare in good time.
- Underlined the importance of cities and local governments' concrete participation.
- Raised the importance of private partnerships and the private sector throughout the process.
- Noted the need for a fair and equitable approach which helps refugees and enhance burden and responsibility sharing.
- Raised the importance of more qualitative pledges that allow to measure concrete impact on how the life of refugees is changing/progressing.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Triggs expressed appreciation to all the interventions made. UNHCR is very much encouraged by the high-level engagement on the part of the co-convenors and others in the room, which already demonstrated a strong whole-of-society approach so central to the implementation of the GCR.