

Let's "Walk the Talk" Together

DRC Statement to the HLOM

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) welcomes the opportunity of the High Level Officials Meeting 2021 to take stock of the progress made on today's most important policy instruments on forced displacement - the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). With global displacement numbers increasing and humanitarian needs growing year by year, the meeting must also be seen as an opportunity to review the commitment of States, United Nations, international agencies, academia, private sector and civil society to critically examine where more or different action is needed to support enhanced and better protection and assistance for refugees, and responsibility sharing to reduce human suffering and expand solutions for the displaced.

DRC places protection, refugee and IDP rights, inclusion, responsibility-sharing and support to host communities of conflict- and displacement-affected persons at the centre of our strategy, and we are intensifying and accelerating our fight against systemic inequality and structural discrimination. We are doing that by redoubling our focus on increased protection and enhanced inclusion, as displaced communities must be able to become self-reliant. DRC also embraces and proactively supports critical new elements of humanitarian work including those related to climate change and the "greening" of responses, the expansion of cash-based programming or collaboration with the private sector and financial institutions - to name a few.

DRC and its partners at local, national and global level share rich evidence of how the lives of displaced populations can improve if proper conditions for their wellbeing are in place. However, we are also witnessing stagnating or even counter-productive trends which are challenging our joint commitment to the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees. On this occasion, DRC points to the following key aspects that need reinforced efforts and genuine commitments from all actors:

- **Responsibility-sharing must be operationalised.** Currently, many States do not apply their commitment within their own territories but perceive the GCR more as an instrument of foreign policy. A lack of coherence in international and domestic approaches to refugee protection risks undermining the commitment to the GCR. DRC also notes that the aspiration to broaden the base of active supporters of the GCR - states, new partners or stakeholders - has not materialised as hoped for. Rather it is still a relatively small core group that proactively engages in the GCR debate. From all actors we need to see stronger support and concrete translation of commitments to equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing towards refugees into action. We are of the firm opinion that all participants of the GCR also have a moral obligation to adhere to their commitments as we all need to uphold the integrity and accountability of our work.
- **Creation of an enabling environment for social protection and livelihood opportunities** does not replace durable solutions to displacement but is a precondition for the dignity and stability of affected populations. DRC will make every effort to enable people affected by conflict and displacement to seek safety and claim basic rights in their pursuit of self-reliance. This is

however only possible in partnership with duty bearers and with a broad “whole of society” approach, bringing together different partners with their respective assets. Above all we need states not only to adhere to the principles of the GCR but to become champions of social protection and to refrain from policies alien to the GCR such as externalization, refugee deterrence or premature return or deportation of people of concern.

- **Ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement and legal aid in asylum capacity development**

At the Global Refugee Forum, the Asylum Capacity Support Group mechanism was established to support the development of asylum capacity. Access to asylum and fair and efficient asylum procedures are cornerstones of refugee protection, and legal aid services for refugees and asylum-seekers are an essential component of a comprehensive response and solutions to forced displacement. DRC calls upon states to honour the commitment of multi-stakeholder engagement also when it comes to development of asylum capacity and access to legal aid. Engaging a range of actors, including the legal community and refugees themselves, will improve both the quality and legitimacy of asylum procedures.

- **Longer-term action needs to become the new normal.** DRC notes with interest that development approaches and medium- to longer-term development financing are being more widely adopted and applied. Yet, at this moment in time DRC cannot determine whether increased, more predictable and more flexible funding mechanisms are being put in place to support this positive narrative. This is one of the key demands of many humanitarian and development actors - we need donors and intermediaries to take pragmatic steps to overcome unpredictable and short term funding cycles.

- **We cannot lose our young people.** Displacement, instability and limited education and livelihood opportunities are tremendous threats to the future of displacement-affected societies. We need to strengthen youth leadership and ensure their meaningful inclusion and participation in global policies, build on dialogue and build alliances with these young members of our society and make them the pillars of our future. Young people offer their partnership in creating solutions. We should accommodate this at all levels.

It is DRC’s hope that the upcoming HLOM will be a catalyst for shifting the attention of all actors and supporters of the GCR towards the “how” of the operationalisation of the GCR principles - an effort DRC is committed to over the coming years.

Copenhagen, Geneva, Dec 2021

Additional Documents:

DRC would like to highlight the following contributions to the HLOM and GCR debate:

- **The Global Compact on Refugees Three Years On: Navigating barriers and maximising incentives in support of refugees and host countries.** This qualitative report by DRC/IRC/NRC offers detailed analysis of how the GCR is influencing responses in three select host countries - Uganda, Colombia, and Bangladesh - and four key donors - the European Union, United States, Germany and Denmark. It also explores whether and the ways in which other states are supporting refugees in terms of financial, political and other kinds of assistance.
https://drc.ngo/media/lb1erbjb/irc_drc_nrc-gcr-report-exec-summary.pdf
- **The Self-Reliance Evidence Review:** A project undertaken by DRC and RefugePoint outlines core questions to be answered to create an evidence base for what works best to help refugees achieve self-reliance.
<https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/evidence-review>
- **Researching the relationship between self-reliance and durable solutions in the context of the Global Compact on Refugees:** A report conducted to complement DRC and RefugePoint's Self-Reliance Evidence Review draws on an extensive literature review relating to refugee self-reliance including livelihoods trainings applied in returnee reintegration and peacebuilding programming in countries of origin, and "integration support" in regions of resettlement.
<https://we.tl/t-CPXqFfLdHK>
- **We believe in youth - do you?** Summarises the findings of nine regional youth consultations in 33 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, MENA and Latin America related to the challenges youth face, our ideas for solutions and our recommendations for meaningful participation to achieve the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees.
<https://drc.ngo/media/0s3ncmez/webelieveinyouth-flyer-december-2021.pdf>