



CRS, ICMC, & JRS statement for the Second Formal Consultation of the Global Compact on Refugees

March 21, 2018

Catholic Relief Services, the International Catholic Migration Commission, and Jesuit Refugee Service/USA deeply appreciate the continued developments in the Global Compact on Refugees and applaud UNHCR for its leadership of this open process. We write to offer additional thoughts on the document as your partner and as a leading responder to international emergencies. Our work is guided by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, calling for protection of human dignity and human life, and establishing the roles and responsibilities of governments and civil society to help families and communities in that work. It is also guided by the Vatican Dicastery on Integral Human Development's, "Responding to Refugees and Migrants: Twenty Action Points."

1. We urge all actors to undertake negotiations with the intent to protect refugees, asylum-seekers and forced migrants, to allow them to access their rights, to achieve self-reliance, to rebuild their lives and to participate in and contribute to the societies in which they live. Towards this end, **future drafts of the Global Compact should more explicitly lay out accountability to affected populations and more comprehensively recommend concrete efforts to involve them in all aspects of response.** The call for refugee involvement in design and decision-making in refugee host countries – paragraph 31 - is an important development in this regard.
2. The Global Mechanisms for Burden and Responsibility Sharing and regular pledging conferences offer great potential to facilitate more holistic planning and response to refugee and host community needs. **We urge the Compact to empower UNHCR to hold governments accountable for their pledges in burden and responsibility sharing.** And we welcome the flexible, multi-year funding and alignment with the Grand Bargain. We also appreciate the efforts to integrate development and emergency response with the local economy, using local resources - including cash - in paragraph 57.
3. We welcome the approach of host country ownership of coordinating the refugee response, in particular, the suggestion of a steering group by governments. **We urge the Compact to define country ownership as broader than government ownership. Stronger language in paragraph 19, to state that "it is recommended that" governments "establish" a steering group, rather than "could," would advance this concept. We further urge that the Compact call for Steering Groups to include representation among a wide group of stakeholders, especially civil society groups including faith-based organizations, refugees themselves, and other key actors.** Recognizing their expertise, private funding, and often the trust local communities have in them, these actors and steering group members should be envisioned as partners to co-design the response, as acknowledged in paragraph 34. Local civil society

organizations in particular should be upheld for their leadership ability and potential, and the Compact should incentivize efforts to support local leadership in responses – whether local organizations, faith-based groups, municipal governments, or local businesses. The efforts to involve local leaders in the mechanisms and to strengthen their capacity - paragraph 32 - are an important step in this regard.

4. The framework to establish more evidence-based decision-making is an important advancement. **We urge that UNHCR and all actors balance the importance of this data with careful consideration for the privacy and security of refugees.**
5. Families are the core unit of any society, and parents hold the primary responsibility to protect children. As privileged agents of the common good, governments share in that responsibility. Separation of families can cause trauma to children and their parents. **We strongly urge that the Compact deter governments from any form of family separation and detention of children.** The draft lacks language on family separation, which causes irreparable emotional harm and trauma to both children and parents. **Rather, we urge the draft to call upon governments to prioritize funding to reunify families in safety.**
6. **The Compact should elaborate more fully the particular needs of especially vulnerable populations, including children, women, girls, female-headed households, religious and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and those with complex medical needs.** These populations merit priority focus and protection, including access to resettlement should local communities prove unable to fulfill their protection and service needs.
7. The principle of non-refoulement – and the significant gap between the law and recent practice - remains of critical concern. Draft one recognizes this more clearly than the zero draft, but more must be said. Governments have a responsibility to guarantee protection, security and dignity for refugees, asylum-seekers and forcibly displaced persons, and any efforts to incentivize refugees to return to an environment that lacks such protection and security violates this life-saving protection. **We urge the Compact to make more robust the requirements of non-refoulement in the Support for Countries of Origin and Voluntary Repatriation section of the document, and for UNHCR to be required to verify that returns are legal, safe and voluntary.**
8. The historically high levels of forced displacement and refugees globally requires all stakeholders to think more creatively, collaborate more, and work more efficiently. The



particular challenges before UNHCR require all donors to ensure that its efficiency and effectiveness are maximized. **We encourage stakeholders to allow UNHCR to focus on its critical roles, including in refugee resettlement and response coordination; and to facilitate implementation by other organizations that can focus on and specialize in implementation. We further urge complete transparency and accountability with UNHCR funding.**

9. Finally, we wish to echo His Eminence Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations, who emphasized “the importance of preventing and addressing the root causes of refugee movements.” We appreciate the language in the First Draft and redouble our own effort to incorporate peacebuilding and conflict resolution into our programs, as well as language recognizing the critical role of development and protection of human rights towards this end.