



The largest alliance of U.S.-based international nongovernmental organizations focused on the world's poor and most vulnerable people.

August 25, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As a group of 41 non-governmental organizations providing protection and life-saving assistance for refugees worldwide, we strongly support and applaud your initiative to host the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis at the margins of the 71st United Nations General Assembly. Traditional resourcing has not been enough to meet the needs of more than 62 million refugees and IDPs who have been forced to flee their homes. Though the summit only includes commitments for refugees – approximately 21 million people – we fully endorse the three pillars that frame the expected commitments from member states: expanded humanitarian funding, expanded resettlement, and improved refugee inclusion and self-reliance – for all displaced, whether they have crossed an international border or not. This is a time of unprecedented refugee movement, and worryingly, protection for refugees is weakening.

We therefore urge the United States Government to lead the international community by:

- **Continuing to go beyond current levels of humanitarian financing:** As the world's single largest humanitarian assistance donor, the U.S. Government has been a leader in providing funding for humanitarian response. In this time of extraordinary need, the U.S. must continue to lead by example. To encourage other governments to increase financing for global humanitarian appeals, the U.S. must commit to higher levels of humanitarian funding at the summit.
- **Expanding and facilitating resettlement in the U.S.:** Over 80% of refugees are hosted in developing countries. Resettlement gives wealthier nations an important opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to global responsibility sharing. We urge the administration to commit to 200,000 refugee and humanitarian admissions in FY2017, including at least 140,000 through traditional refugee resettlement and 60,000 through other creative solutions such as expansions of family-based, employment, and student visas. This 100% increase in resettlement and alternative admissions pathways would demonstrate that the United States, the world's largest recipient for refugee resettlement, is willing to be as ambitious as it is asking others to be.
- **Fully committing to bolster refugee inclusion and self-reliance through access to quality education:** We must close the education gap for the 3.6 million refugee children who are out of school, not only for the sake of refugee youth, but also for the countries to which they will return to rebuild. The *February 2016*

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Nancy E. Wilson
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Supporting Syria and the Region Conference resulted in pledges to get all Syrian refugee children in neighboring countries in school. We urge your administration to call for previous pledges on refugee education to be honored and that an additional one million refugees worldwide gain access to education as a result of the President's Leaders' Summit. We also urge you to draw attention to the importance of non-formal education tracks. These complementary initiatives have been proven to address the needs of refugee children and youth who have been out of school for extended periods of time by offering alternative entry points to education.

- **Fully committing to bolster refugee inclusion and self-reliance through access to livelihoods:** The legal right to work is essential for refugees to meet their basic needs and live in dignity. Beyond the right to work, refugees also need access to meaningful employment. Commitments made at the summit to increase legal work opportunities for refugees should be accompanied by legal employment implementation plans. The plans should establish clear navigable pathways for employment, including access to documentation, removal of financial and other policy obstacles, and protection from exploitation, particularly for unskilled workers, women, and school-age children. We, the undersigned, humanitarian and development actors are committed to work alongside host governments to assist as possible in generating job opportunities and vocational trainings that match commitments made and ensure that all refugees, including women, have the support they need.

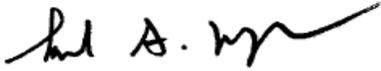
In the administration's work on the summit - both internally and with other states - we urge you to give special attention to several over-arching considerations. First and foremost, it is critical that we ensure adequate access to protection for refugees in all contexts and stages of displacement. This includes accessible and affordable mechanisms for obtaining legal residency and registration, and access to asylum. As such, the administration should work systematically with refugee-hosting states to strengthen relevant legal frameworks and dismantle barriers that prohibit refugees from fully accessing critical health, educational, and vocational services.

Furthermore, in order to lead by example, the administration must demonstrate that critical refugee protection and humanitarian principles apply to refugees at our own door and - more specifically - those fleeing violence and persecution in Central America. It is imperative in all contexts that we attempt to address root causes and the drivers of conflict, especially since violent conflict is the primary source of human displacement. It severely disrupts development, and is costly to both individuals and countries. To break the cycles of violence that fuel displacement, we ask the U.S. to continue to pursue political solutions to crises and to allocate additional resources toward addressing the root causes of displacement.

For the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis to have a lasting impact, a public accountability mechanism must be put in place to track states' commitments. Regular public reporting on progress against commitments should be an essential part of U.S. bilateral relations in the years to come. This public accountability should not only apply to the U.S.' commitments but also to how the U.S.' response is guided by beneficiary feedback. The energy demonstrated by the U.S. administration and state actors around the world in securing these commitments should not halt on September 21, but should redouble thereafter to realize the vision of the summit in practice. With principled, tenacious leadership on refugee protection and assistance, the U.S. may be able to support and promote one of the essential cornerstones of multilateralism in an age where it is being eroded.

We, as civil society representatives, recommit our support and energy toward improving protection and response for displaced persons around the world. Through InterAction we will make a substantial pledge to advance this agenda. In partnership and solidarity, we stand at the ready to share in this responsibility and assist in translating these global commitments into real change.

Sincerely,



Chief Executive Officer
InterAction

ADRA International
Alliance for Peacebuilding
American Refugee Committee
AmeriCares
Better World Campaign
CARE
Center for Women Policy Studies
ChildFund International
Church World Service
Concern Worldwide US
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Episcopal Relief & Development
Global Campaign For Education-US
Global Communities
Global Links
Handicap International
Heart to Heart International
Helen Keller International
HIAS, Global Jewish Organization for
Refugees
InsideNGO
International Catholic Migration Commission

International Medical Corps
International Rescue Committee
Jesuit Refugee Service USA
Keystone Human Services International
Lutheran World Relief
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Mercy Corps
Mercy-USA for Aid and Development
Pathfinder International
Save the Children
Seva Foundation
Stop Hunger Now
Syria Relief and Development
U.S. Committee for Refugees and
Immigrants
United Nations Association of the USA
Women Thrive Worldwide
Women's Refugee Commission
World Concern
World Hope International
Zakat Foundation of America

cc:
Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Vice President of the United States
Honorable Secretary John Kerry, United States Secretary of State
Honorable Samantha Power, United States Ambassador to the United Nations
Honorable Susan Rice, National Security Advisor
Honorable Gayle E. Smith, Administrator, United States Agency for International Development