UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the Global Refugee Forum 2023

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At a glance: meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the GRF 2023

Participation in preparations

- 70 forcibly displaced and stateless experts from across the globe were identified through an open call for expressions of interest and participated in global, regional, and country-level GRF preparations from June 2023 onwards.
- 21 GCR multi-stakeholder pledges and initiatives benefitted from direct inputs of people with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, including a group of 70 refugee experts selected for the GRF 2023, the UN Common Pledge 2.0 refugee expert group, the Advisory Board of Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons, the Refugee Advisory Group to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, women refugee-led organizations, and other organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. They assumed the role of pledge advisors, reviewed key documents, participated in core group and other meetings, and co-designed and assumed speaking roles in related events.
- The Advisory Board to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnerships with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons actively participated in GRF preparations, including by selecting the 70 experts, representing the Board's recommendations in the GRF preparatory meetings, leading the drafting process of the Joint Refugee Statement, co-organizing a high-level parallel event on meaningful refugee participation, and engaging in different pledges and initiatives.
- An 8-week GRF preparatory webinar series, open to all forcibly displaced and stateless persons and available in four main languages, prepared participants for their effective and impactful participation in the GRF. Many of the sessions were co-facilitated with forcibly displaced and stateless experts. Similar initiatives were led by refugee-led organizations such as R-SEAT and the GRN who facilitated additional GRF training programmes aimed at maximizing GRF participation.
- UNHCR and its Advisory Board organized an in-person orientation meeting for all forcibly displaced and stateless participants one day before the Forum, which included an exchange with UNHCR Senior management, a briefing on the GRF programme and opportunities for engagement, a protection briefing, a training session on communications, and a networking space.
- Forcibly displaced and stateless persons participated in GRF preparations at the regional level, e.g., in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) regional pledge development discussions and events.

Participation during the GRF

- 328 forcibly displaced and stateless persons participated in the GRF 2023 in person in Geneva, representing 8 per cent of the total number of participants. This included the 70 experts, member delegations of the Advisory Board, delegations from 50 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, refugee student leaders, graduates from the UNHCR Journalism Mentorship Programme, refugee children, refugee artisans, members of the Global Youth Advisory Council, and refugee representatives in government, NGO, private sector, academia, and United Nations agency delegations.
- 14 States included one or more refugees in their official government delegation, many of them assuming the role of refugee advisors. In total, 23 refugee representatives participated in the GRF as part of these 14 delegations, constituting a significant improvement from the first GRF in 2019, which saw only one state, Canada, attend with a refugee advisor.
- Several States, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, and New Zealand, shared their speaking time in plenary and other events with their respective refugee advisors.
- Brazil, Germany, and Switzerland, committed to creating refugee advisory mechanisms at the national level.
- For the first time ever, refugee children, children with lived experience of forced displacement, and a host community child representative participated in the GRF, announcing pledges in plenary and high-level parallel events and the Speakers' Corner.
- 10 graduates from the UNHCR Journalism Mentorship Programme and four additional refugee journalists covered the GRF live from the Palexpo, e.g., through the UNHCR Live Blog, and conducted interviews with high-level participants.
- During the GRF Opening plenary, moderated by a refugee student leader, the Joint Refugee Statement was presented by a member of the Advisory Board. The statement was endorsed by 175 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.
- 53 per cent of all multi-stakeholder pledges were announced in plenary by forcibly displaced and stateless participants.
- 35 out of the 40 (88%) high-level parallel events featured forcibly displaced and stateless speakers showcasing their impactful contributions.
- The dedicated high-level parallel event on meaningful refugee participation demonstrated how meaningful participation improves humanitarian responses. During the event, the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) and R-SEAT formally announced the launch of the Coalition on Meaningful Refugee Participation, with Australia and the Netherlands as State co-chairs.
- 36 per cent of all Speakers' Corner speakers had lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness.
- The multi-stakeholder pledge on Refugee Participation, co-led by the Global Refugee-led Network, Oxfam International, and Independent Diplomat, counted 71 new pledge contributions, and over 100 signatories.
- The R-Space, a multipurpose space for representatives of refugee-led organizations and refugee leaders, featured 40 linked events led by refugees and addressing issues of priority to them, with an estimated 300 attendees per day.
- GRF public screening sessions were organized with and for refugees in the field who were unable to travel to Geneva, including in refugee camps and settlements, for example, in Somalia and Rwanda.
- Numerous refugee participants were interviewed in the VIP Social Media Zone to capture their key messages to world leaders.
- During the GRF Closing Ceremony, four displaced and stateless women leaders reflected on the GRF 2023 and made recommendations on charting the way forward in an interactive conversation with the High Commissioner.

Participation in GRF follow-up

- In order to include their recommendations and needs in the GRF follow-up process, UNHCR organized two dedicated online debriefing sessions in January 2024 that were open to all forcibly displaced and stateless GRF 2023 participants. These sessions were complemented by a survey to capture detailed feedback and recommendations.
- Promoting meaningful participation in GRF 2023 did not come without challenges. Key barriers to participation and recommendations on how to overcome them were documented to inform future GRF-related activities. Main challenges included visa and travel document issues, language barriers, limited or insufficient internet access and/or availability of a technical device to participate in preparatory and learning phases as well as online meetings, time zone differences, physical accessibility in some parts of the GRF venue, family or work obligations, and loss of income.
- Going forward until December 2024, the Advisory Board will continue to play a crucial role guiding UNHCR, by sharing their recommendations on how to strengthen collaboration with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons at the global level, contributing to the GCR processes and initiatives, and advising on meaningful participation.
- Multi-stakeholder pledges that included refugee advisors or organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons remain committed to continuing the advisors' engagement in pledge implementation and monitoring leading to the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) 2025.
- Another promising trend is the increasing establishment of refugee advisory bodies at the country level to ensure expertise-based and sustained inputs into national and local policy-making processes. At the GRF, three new countries committed to creating such participation mechanisms: Brazil, Germany, and Switzerland.
- The newly launched Coalition on Meaningful Refugee Participation will play a crucial role in mobilizing action towards meaningful participation in policy and programming that affect refugees and holding stakeholders that pledged towards meaningful refugee participation accountable.

I. Meaningful participation in the lead-up to the Forum

An expertise-focused approach to participation: 70 forcibly displaced and stateless experts

In December 2022, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) Team issued a global Call for Expressions of Interest to persons with lived experience of displacement and statelessness to contribute as experts to GCR implementation in the preparatory phase towards the GRF. 'Expertise' was conceptualized as acquired skills and knowledge of a specific field as a result of work/voluntary experiences or formal/informal education. Following a screening process by UNHCR Regional Bureaux and Country Operations, 269 expressions of interest were longlisted, and the Advisory Board to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons shortlisted the final 70 experts prioritized for participation in the GRF process. Starting in June 2023, these experts were linked with thematic and regional GCR multi-stakeholder pledges and initiatives based on an evaluation of their thematic backgrounds and potential areas of contribution. The experts committed to contributing until March 2024 in pledge implementation, evaluation, and monitoring. This linking exercise was a dynamic process, as some initiatives had not engaged displaced and stateless people previously.

Participation in GCR multi-stakeholder pledges and initiatives

In total, 21[1] GCR multi-stakeholder pledges and initiatives benefitted from direct contributions from persons with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness, including the 70 experts, the UN Common Pledge 2.0 refugee expert group, the Advisory Board of Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons, the Refugee Advisory Group to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, women refugee-led organizations, and other organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons. They assumed roles of pledge advisors, reviewing key documents such as pledging guidance, frameworks, and commitments, participating in core group and other meetings, and co-designing or representing the pledge in related events and discussions, or were directly involved as pledging entities themselves.

[1] *1. Asylum Capacity Support Group; 2. 2023 Global Legal Community; 3. Ending Statelessness; 4. Age, Gender and Diversity Group of Friends; 5. Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts; 6. Gender Equality and Protection from Gender-Based Violence; 7. Digital Protection - Prevention of the Harmful Impact of Hate Speech, Misinformation, and Disinformation; 8. Sport for Inclusion and Protection; 9. Economic Inclusion and Social Protection; 10. Education Alliance; 11. Climate Action; 12. Climate Resilient Sustainable Human Settlements for Refugees and their Hosting Communities; 13. Health - National Health System Inclusion and Fostering Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing; 14. Shifting Power - Advancing Localization of Research and Elevating the Voices of Host and Forcibly Displaced Communities Globally; 15. Supporting Refugee Family Reunification; 16. Agriculture, Food Systems, and Food Security; 17. Refugee participation; 18. Advancing Localisation in Displacement and Statelessness Responses; 19. UN Common Pledge 2.0.; 20. IGAD Support Platform; 21. MIRPS Support Platform.*

Examples of participation in multi-stakeholder pledges

Sport for Inclusion and Protection
Reviewed commitments received from reference group members (a group of multi-stakeholder actors from the sports world or working through sport that were developing the pledge, its reporting process and leading on its mobilization); delivered pledge statements at all informal and formal GRF preparatory meetings; participated in linked and social events around the GRF; and mobilized the pledge, e.g., through panel discussions to advocate for the role of sport in displacement contexts (TAFISA conference, Sport and Development Week of Action workshop).

Gender Equality and Protection from Gender-Based Violence
Experts representing refugee-led organizations and Call to Action partner organizations, including those led by women, participated in Facilitation Cell and bilateral meetings; inputted to/reviewed pledging documents and guidance, including inputs shared during joint events; participated in pledge-related events (Women Deliver Conference, ANFD annual meeting, Call to Action pledge info webinar organized by Germany, gender advocacy session, Joint Call to Action – IASC Principals High-level Roundtable on GBV funding, Peace-building dialogue); and involved in high-level parallel event design and speaking engagements across linked and related thematic events. 19 pledges were made in support of engaging and partnering with women-refugee-led organizations (WRLOs) – one of the core objectives of the pledge.

In the words of Noor Azizah, one of the refugee experts contributing to this pledge, “Our contribution extends beyond personal narratives to encompass valuable expertise. In this initiative, I underscored the crucial significance of quality pledges supported by tangible resources and well-defined policies.”

UN Common Pledge 2.0
The UN Common Pledge 2.0 has been engaging a group of refugee experts since autumn 2022 to ensure meaningful refugee participation from the onset. These experts participated in the innovation lab, which kick-started the co-creation process, and have since engaged in every aspect of the design and promotion of the pledge, including contributing to sessions with UN entities, UN Country Teams, and donors, and the organization of and participation in the high-level parallel event on the UN Common Pledge at the GRF.

Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Group of Friends (GoF)
Participated in the AGD GoF meetings and contributed to its deliverables and events, e.g.: forcibly displaced and stateless people played a central role in planning the AGD session of the GRF webinar series: “Promoting Child Rights, Disability and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion through an AGD Approach” for all forcibly displaced and stateless GRF participants, 24 October 2023. On 8 November 2023, the AGD GoF hosted the event, “Making Inclusion a Reality in GRF Pledges: A

Dialogue on Age, Gender, and Diversity," with 75 participants, including States, RLOs, and GRF Stakeholders. A refugee expert on working with LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons and a 16-year-old activist in the Child Rights Initiative were amongst the panellists. The event was co-hosted by Australia, with Brazil and Germany as speakers.

Supporting Refugee Family Reunification

Participated in monthly pledge meetings, the virtual pledge launch, and pledging workshop to support the development of pledges and coordination as well as spoke at a linked event. Different refugee-led organizations also contributed to the pledge, one of which (Cultuur in Harmonie) is on the pledge leadership team as a Pillar Co-Lead.

Economic Inclusion and Social Protection

Bi-weekly meetings were held with refugee experts to discuss progress and outreach to local refugee-led organizations and networks, understand perceptions and priorities; developed communications products featuring refugee voices for GRF and pledge-related high-level parallel event, including Speakers' Corner intervention preparation; and created a refugee-led video for the related GRF high-level parallel event.

Group of Friends of Health of Refugees and Host Communities (GoFH) (National Health System Inclusion and MHPSS)

Participated in regular meetings, reviewed pledging documents in group meetings, and participated on the informal advisory panel for the design of the high-level parallel event. Individual and small group meetings were organized with experts on overall engagement and preparation for GRF speaking roles as panellists for the high-level parallel event on Health and MHPSS, plenary announcement of pledges and a Speakers' Corner intervention.

Resettlement

The 20-member Refugee Advisory Group to the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP) (formerly, Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) was established in 2020 and ensures that refugees influence policy decision-making on resettlement and complementary pathways, including through the multi-stakeholder pledge on Resettlement.

Advancing Localization in Displacement and Statelessness Responses

UNHCR and ICVA co-convened this pledge to enhance the capacity and ownership of local actors, especially civil society organizations, and develop more equitable partnerships. Different refugee and stateless-led organizations are engaged in its reference and thematic working groups. The Advisory Board to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons and the NGO Reference Group reviewed the draft commitments on funding, capacity sharing, and inclusion in the decision-making process. As of February 2024, 36 stakeholders, including Member States, INGOs,

pledged 104 million USD to support 470 local organizations, including over 200 refugee-led organizations.

Advisory Board to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnerships with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons

UNHCR's global, inter-divisional Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons is supported by an Advisory Board of 16 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people operating across all seven regions where UNHCR works. It is led by and works for people of different ages, genders, and diverse groups, and includes refugees, internally displaced, and stateless people. With a tenure spanning from 2022 to 2024, the Advisory Board continues to play a pivotal role in advising UNHCR at the global level on meaningful participation and thematic areas.

In addition to members' engagement in different GCR initiatives, the Advisory Board was responsible for the final shortlisting of the 70 forcibly displaced and stateless experts and was actively involved in GRF preparatory processes, including consultations on the GRF programme, participation in GRF preparatory meetings, the design and implementation of a high-level parallel event on meaningful participation, and the drafting the Joint Refugee Statement, among others.

Participation in GRF preparatory meetings

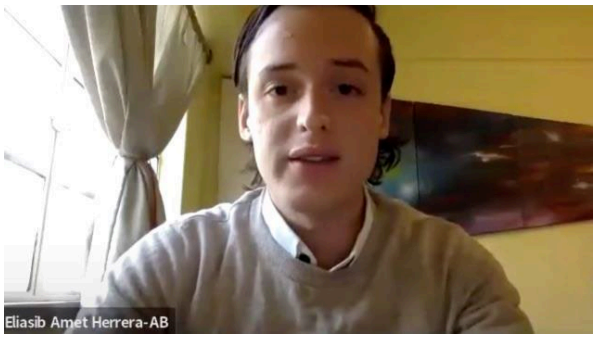
During the kick-off preparatory meeting for the Global Refugee Forum 2023 with Switzerland, on 13 March 2023, Julius Mvenyi Ntobuah, representative of Newcomers with Disabilities in Sweden, delivered a statement on behalf of the Advisory Board, calling for stronger engagement of displaced and stateless persons and organizations led by them, leveraging on their expertise in preparations for the GRF. Julius also presented the activities led by the Advisory Board, such as the drafting of the Joint Refugee Statement and the organization of a high-level parallel event on meaningful refugee participation.

During the second formal preparatory meeting for the GRF 2023 on 17 May 2023, Renee Dixson, representative of the Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN), delivered a statement on behalf of the Advisory Board. In their intervention, Renee called upon stakeholders to provide adequate funding to organizations led by displaced and stateless persons and to prioritize the needs of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. They observed a gap in GRF pledges that focus on meaningful participation, LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities, and older persons, and emphasized expertise among the Advisory Board members in supporting the development of pledges on meaningful participation and other areas.

Advisory Board member Renee Dixson addressing States, UNHCR, and other stakeholders at the second formal preparatory meeting for the GRF.

At the third formal GRF preparatory meeting on 1 September 2023, Advisory Board member John Jal Dak from Uganda and representing the Youth Social Advocacy Team, delivered a statement on behalf of the Board. In his statement, he called for "ensuring meaningful refugee participation before, during, and post-GRF and across pledges. The displaced people belong here; it's their space to be heard and be part of the solution!" Meaningful refugee participation was one of the main themes in floor interventions and remarks by UNHCR.

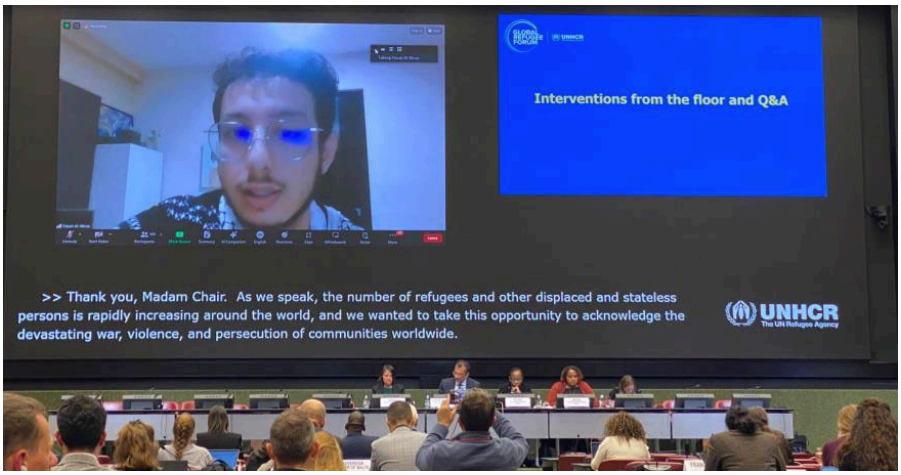
Advisory Board member John Jal Dak addressing States, UNHCR, and other stakeholders at the third formal preparatory meeting for the GRF.



Advisory Board member Eliasib Amet Herrera addressing States, UNHCR, and other stakeholders at the third quarterly informal briefing on the GCR.

During the third quarterly informal briefing on the GCR on 18 October 2023, Eliasib Amet Ramirez Herrera, representative of the Advisory Board member organization Migrantes y Exiliados Con la Paz (MECoPa), delivered a statement on behalf of the Board. He called on all stakeholders to increase efforts to realize GCR objective four on solutions and emphasized the need to increase financial support to organizations led by displaced and stateless people: "We have witnessed the capacity of displaced people to organize and address urgent needs in humanitarian emergencies while advocating for their rights and making their voices heard. For this to succeed, we call on all stakeholders to provide financial support to organizations led by displaced and stateless persons and support their role as agents of change."

At the fourth quarterly informal briefing on the GCR on 17 November 2023, Hasan Al-Akraa, representative of the Advisory Board member organization Refugee Emergency Fund, delivered a statement on behalf of the Board. He emphasized the need to channel more funding into organizations led by displaced and stateless people and the importance of "engaging with and including people with lived experience of forced displacement at all levels of advocacy."

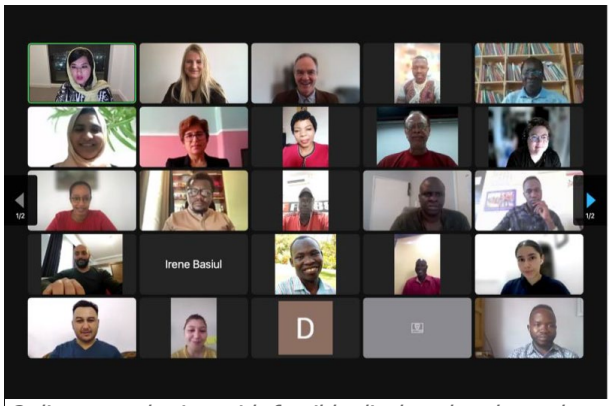


Advisory Board member Hasan Al-Akraa addressing States, UNHCR, and other stakeholders at the fourth quarterly informal briefing on the GCR.

The recordings of all meetings can be found here.

Joint Refugee Statement

Two Advisory Board working groups were established and met weekly to draft the Joint Refugee Statement and co-organize the GRF high-level parallel event on meaningful refugee participation.[2] The working groups each comprised three nominated Board members and UNHCR support staff.



Online consultation with forcibly displaced and stateless persons on the draft Joint Refugee Statement.

The drafting process of the Joint Refugee Statement was led by the Advisory Board over a six-month process, to be presented at the GRF during the opening session in plenary. The draft version was circulated to all displaced and stateless GRF participants and the organizations they lead at the end of October 2023 to provide feedback via an online tool. This written feedback was complemented by an online consultation held on 6 November 2023 led by the Board. The online event explained the consultation process, collected additional input, and provided a space for an exchange of thoughts on the draft version. Around 80 forcibly displaced and stateless leaders participated in the 90-minute session. Based on the input received, a final version was prepared and circulated to displaced and stateless persons and the organizations they lead before the GRF. 175 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons as well as the group of 70 experts endorsed the statement.

See the full version of the Joint Refugee Statement in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic, and the List of endorsing organizations.

Training and orientation opportunities before the GRF

Webinar series

UNHCR coordinated an optional 8-week webinar series from October to November 2023 to prepare forcibly displaced and stateless participants and their organizations

[2] *Read about the high-level parallel event on meaningful refugee participation on pages 24-25.*

for the GRF 2023. The sessions spanned various subjects, each specifically designed to exchange expertise and enhance the participants' understanding and capacity in GRF-relevant areas. Most of the sessions were co-created and/or facilitated with forcibly displaced and stateless participants, building on their rich and diverse areas of expertise and experience. Each two-hour session included a presentation from experts in the respective field, followed by interactive Q&A for participants to clarify doubts, share insights, and explore ideas. Simultaneous interpretation was available in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic. The webinars were open to all forcibly displaced and stateless persons participating in the GRF.

Webinar learning programme

1. Introductory session, Global Compact on Refugees & Global Refugee Forum, 3 October 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: UNHCR GCR Coordination Team

2. Part 1: How and why the media cover issues of forced displacement and statelessness; Part 2: Effective communication and campaigning (Thought leadership, media engagement, Campaigning, Social media), 10 October 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: UNHCR News & Media Section, Social Media Section, Campaigns Section

3. Meaningful Engagement at the Global Refugee Forum: Effectively Maximizing Advocacy Efforts, 17 October 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session lead: Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT)

4. Promoting Child Rights, Disability and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion through an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Approach, 24 October 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: Advisory Board and Refugee Experts on AGD, UNHCR Division of International Protection Teams, International Disability Alliance (IDA), AGD Group of Friends

5. Gender advocacy, 31 October 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: UNHCR Division of International Protection, refugee experts, Co-facilitators: Women Refugee-led Organizations, Refugee gender advocates

6. Youth and student-led global advocacy, 7 November 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: UNHCR Education & Youth, GRYN

7. Policy and Diplomacy: An Introduction to Creating Durable Solutions, 14 November 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: US Refugee Advisory Board (USRAB) and Refugee Congress

8. Protection, safety, security and logistics, 21 November 2023, 13:00-15:00 CET, Session leads: UNHCR Office for Switzerland and GCR Team

Training programmes led by refugee-led organizations

In addition to the webinar series for forcibly displaced and stateless participants organized by UNHCR, some refugee-led organizations organized additional GRF training programmes. UNHCR disseminated the training invitations to all displaced and stateless leaders and their organizations invited.

- **R-SEAT (Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table)** organized a 5-week in-depth training program for refugee participants attending the GRF, organized by region and language, focusing on the relevant politics and protocol for meetings of the global refugee regime. The training covered strategic advocacy within Geneva, and the evolution of meaningful refugee participation. The training commenced in November 2023 and ended one week before the Forum.

- The **Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN)** organized five webinar sessions open to all refugees and their organizations and initiatives as a space for promoting the sharing of experiences and peer-to-peer learning, covering topics such as RLOs in policymaking, climate change, mainstreaming the AGD approach and meaningful refugee participation, the GRF pledging process, and shaping key messages to bring to the GRF 2023.

In-person orientation

On the day before the Global Refugee Forum 2023, 21 December 2023, UNHCR organized a four-hour orientation meeting for all forcibly displaced and stateless participants at the CICG in Geneva. Live interpretation was available in English, Arabic, Spanish, and French. Some 180 of the over 320 displaced and stateless GRF 2023 participants were in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a positive orientation so that participants could maximize their GRF participation, including through:

- A presentation on the GRF programme
- Briefings on protection considerations, logistics, and support provided throughout the GRF, including the GRF Safe Space open to all participants with lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness
- An in-person communications training (how to convey key messages, pitching ideas, and social media training)

- An interactive exchange with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and Deputy High Commissioner, Kelly Clements

- Meet-and-greet/networking lunch among the participants and bilateral meetings, e.g., between participants from the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region with the Regional Bureau Director

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The High Commissioner answered several questions that were submitted and voted on by the participants through a pigeonhole and reminded participants that "coming here gives you a responsibility as well. A responsibility to also make pledges and to influence the debate and the discussions so that the pledges are really useful and solutions-oriented for all of you."

Watch this video produced during the meeting to hear what some of the participants had to say one day before the Forum.

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Good practices for engagement at the regional level

IGAD Support Platform

GRF refugee participants meet with UNHCR at the African Climate Summit in Nairobi. © UNHCR/Hanson Ghandi Tamfu

Given the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) commitment[3] to advance meaningful refugee participation, 10 individual GRF refugee invitees (including 7 refugee experts, 2 refugee students, and 1 Advisory Board member) participated in the Youth Climate Assembly (1 to 3 September 2023) and in the African Climate Summit (4 to 6 September 2023) in Nairobi, Kenya. Participants contributed to the discussions about climate-induced displacement and met with the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, Raouf Mazou, and the UNHCR Special Advisor on Climate Action, Andrew Harper, to share recommendations on refugee inclusion in climate action programmes.

Five of the refugee representatives who participated in the September meetings subsequently also were invited to the Annual Ministerial Stocktaking Meeting of the IGAD Support Platform and implementation of the Plan of Action for the Nairobi Declaration. The meeting took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 20 to 23 November 2023, and culminated in the endorsement of the new IGAD Policy Framework on Refugee Protection and two regional IGAD GRF pledges on climate and durable solutions.

Refugee expert Francois Bakouroua Narcisse addressing the participants of the IGAD Annual Ministerial Stocktaking to deliver key recommendations.

© UNHCR/Caroline Lensing-Hebben

The refugee representatives actively participated in the discussions on regional GRF pledges and influenced the final Ministerial communiqué. During the high-level segment, alongside the Ministers, refugee expert Narcisse Bakouroua Francois highlighted the need for free movement within host countries, biometric travel documents, and free visas in the IGAD region.

[3] *In the "IGAD – EAC Ministerial Declaration on Durable Solutions for Refugees in the East and Horn of Africa", 16 June 2023, IGAD and partner States of the EAC agreed to "ensure refugees and host communities participate in governance of refugee response plans and structures" and to "advance the localization agenda by fostering engagement with … Refugee-Led Organizations and increasing budgetary support" (p.5).*

UNHCR's Regional Director for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes, Mamadou Dian Balde, met with the refugee representatives and noted: "Refugee representatives who have been involved in GRF preparatory processes at country levels attended the event and were very clear in their message to Member States and all of us, including the need to meaningfully consult them on policies, and that they can contribute to their implementation."

UNHCR Regional Director, East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes, Mamadou Dian Balde, meets with five refugee representatives after the high-level segment with IGAD Ministers. © UNHCR/Jacqueline Kegode

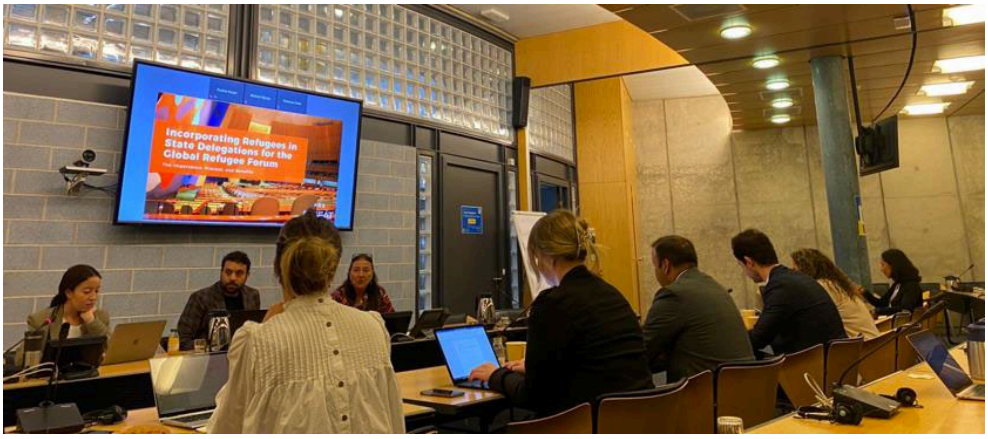
MIRPS Support Platform

The MIRPS Regional Support Platform extended a special invitation to one of the 70 forcibly displaced experts, a Venezuelan refugee residing in Costa Rica who was engaged in the Global Academic Interdisciplinary Network (GAIN), a GCR initiative. The expert played a pivotal role by delivering opening remarks at the Learning Event on Economic Integration held in Costa Rica, emphasizing the key challenges forcibly displaced and stateless people face in economic integration.

Furthermore, refugee and internally displaced representatives actively contributed to another significant MIRPS Learning Event focused on mental health and psycho-social support, hosted in El Salvador. They participated in the discussions and interacted with government representatives from MIRPS countries, enriching the site visits to prominent facilities like Ciudad Mujer and Centro Urbano de Bienestar y Oportunidades (CUBO) and offering firsthand insights into the practical implementation of mental health and psycho-social support initiatives. This engagement fostered a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by displaced populations and underscored the importance of participatory approaches to addressing their needs within the MIRPS framework.

Good practices for national-level engagement

On 15 September 2023, Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) organized a "Brunch & Learn" technical session hosted at UNHCR on meaningfully engaging refugee advisors within State delegations at global meetings, such as the GRF. The session aimed to explore practical ways to integrate refugee advisors into national delegations while maximizing their participation. Nine States and an INGO attended the event.



R-SEAT's "Brunch & Learn" technical session with States and INGOs at UNHCR HQ in Geneva. © UNHCR/Pauline Haupt

An external guidance note for stakeholders on including displaced and stateless people in GRF delegations was developed by UNHCR and published on the GCR digital platform here.

A number of delegations also shared examples of good practices for engaging displaced and stateless persons at the national level.

Uganda

In preparation for Uganda's co-convenorship of the GRF, a set of thematic areas for prioritized engagement and support was identified. For each of the five priority areas, an inclusive and participatory preparation process was conducted that culminated in a technical roundtable to assess the current refugee situation, identify the main challenges and opportunities, and provide recommendations on possible new policy pledges. The roundtables were used as the main instrument to ensure that all stakeholders had a voice in shaping the thematic areas and that their respective priorities were reflected. Led by the government, the process involved development and humanitarian partners, international and national NGOs, the private sector, and notably refugee and host community members.

Refugee and RLO representatives, including two representatives of the Refugee Engagement Forum (REF) – Uganda's main, formal refugee participation mechanism – represented their communities in the series of GRF preparatory thematic roundtables and field consultations aimed at reviewing and refining the

three pledges of the refugee community that were included as part of the Government of Uganda's GRF pledges.
While the REF Representatives participated in each GRF preparatory event, additional REF meetings were used to provide feedback to the communities on the outcomes of the discussions, to involve them in the development of partner pledges, and to develop their own pledges. The REF members identified potential pledges, which were then validated through consultative feedback sessions in each settlement. The final pledges were first announced at a pre-GRF conference in Kampala and followed by the high-level parallel event on District Coordination at the GRF 2023 in Geneva, announced by the refugee representatives who came as part of Uganda's government delegation. The first meeting of the REF in April 2024 will be an opportunity to draw further lessons learned from the meaningful participation of refugees in the GRF process.

Canada

Canada significantly advanced meaningful refugee participation in the preparations for GRF 2023 at the national level through a series of consultations and engagement with civil society. Refugees and refugee-led organizations actively participated in two consultations specifically dedicated to providing them with a prominent platform to share their recommendations and needs. Participants engaged in thematic discussions and were encouraged to provide written feedback to the Government of Canada as it formulated its pledge package. Additionally, UNHCR Canada facilitated three consultations, inclusive of refugees and refugee-led organizations, with one session specifically tailored for refugee youth focusing on education. The outcomes of all these consultations were relayed to Canada for integration into their pledge package, demonstrating a concerted effort to ensure refugee perspectives were incorporated in the GRF 2023 preparations.

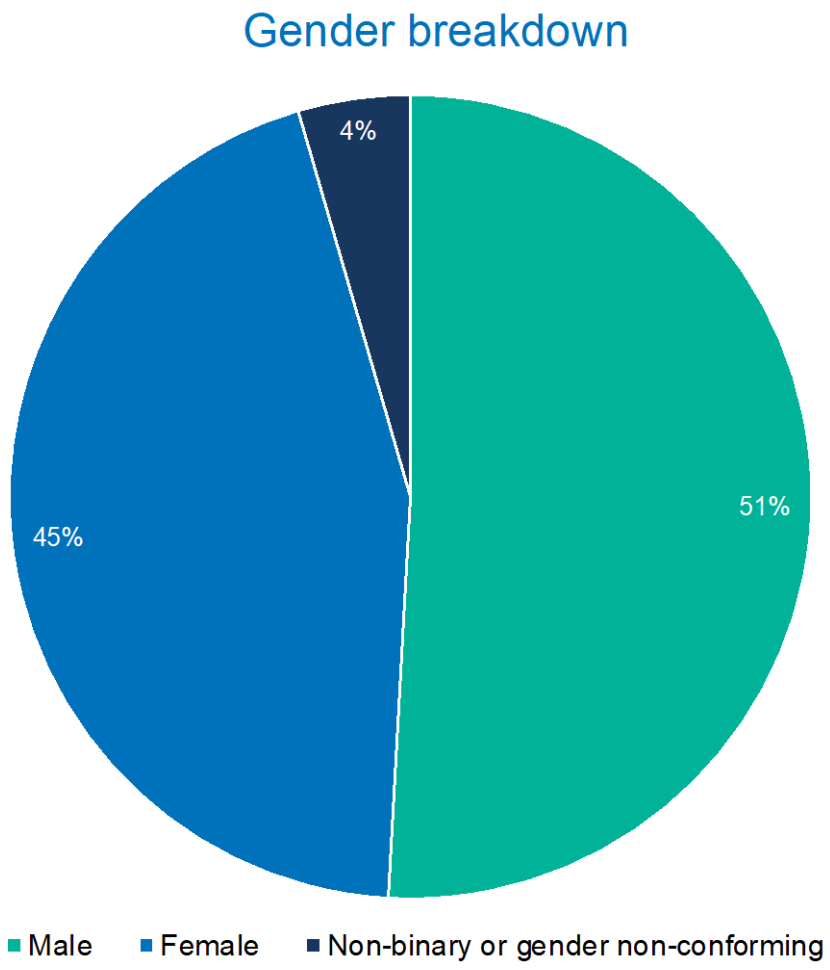
II. Meaningful participation during the Forum

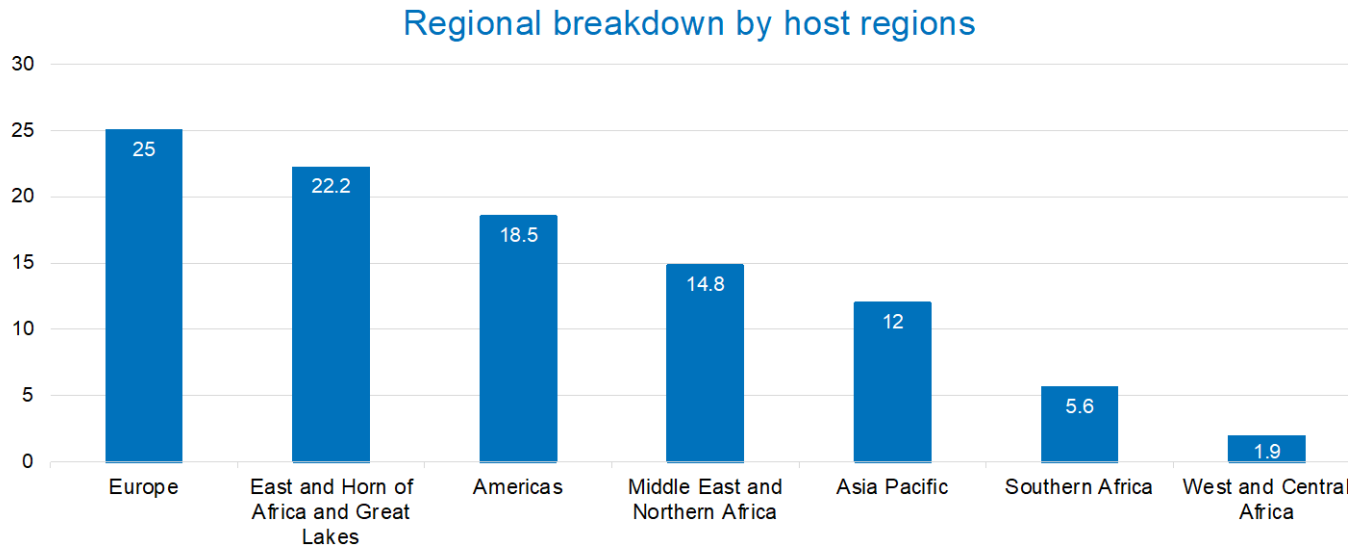
At least 328 forcibly displaced and stateless persons participated in the GRF 2023 in person in Geneva, representing 8 per cent of the total number of 4200 registered participants. In comparison, at the first GRF in 2019, around 70 displaced and stateless participants were present, amounting to less than 3% of all 3000 participants. The 328 GRF 2023 participants included refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, stateless persons, returnees, and resettled refugees. They participated through different groups including the 70 experts group, the member delegations of the UNHCR Advisory Board, delegations of 50 organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, refugee student leaders, graduates from the UNHCR Journalism Mentorship Programme, refugee children, refugee artisans, members of the Global Youth Advisory Council, and refugee representatives in government, NGO, private sector, academia and UN agency delegations.

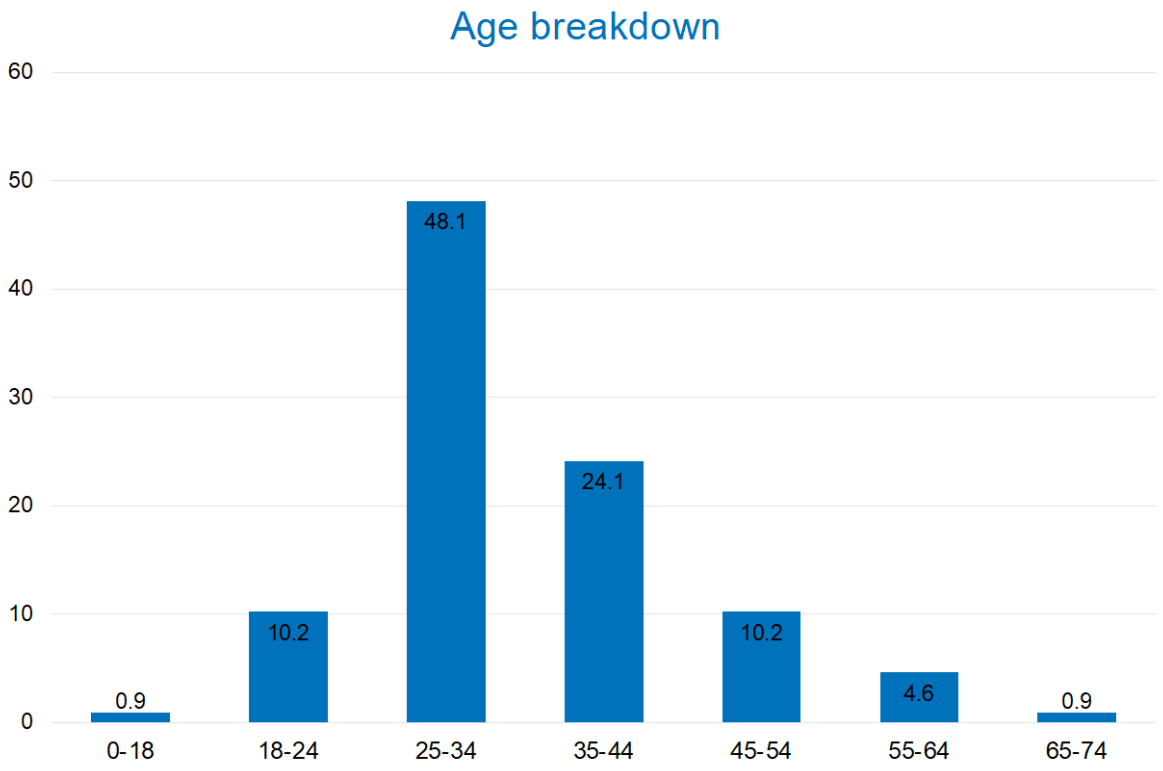
In the GRF plenary, there were 150 dedicated seats reserved for forcibly displaced and stateless persons (100 seats mainly for individual leaders and 50 for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons). 50 Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons were identified in collaboration with UNHCR Regional Bureaux and Country Operations invited by UNHCR's Partnership Coordination Service with support from the Community-Based Protection Unit.

Age, gender, diversity, and regional representation

The 108 displaced and stateless participants whose participation was directly funded by UNHCR were represented as follows:




Regional breakdown by host regions
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
25
22.2
18.5
14.8
12
5.6
1.9
Europe
East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes
Americas
Middle East and Northern Africa
Asia Pacific
Southern Africa
West and Central Africa


Age breakdown
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
0.9
10.2
48.1
24.1
10.2
4.6
0.9
0-18
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65-74

Disability

Twelve of the 108 participants self-identified as persons with disabilities, out of which three were accompanied by disability support persons at all times, including a dedicated seat next to them in plenary. These three disability support persons were also funded by UNHCR. Participants with disabilities had the opportunity to share their lived experiences and network with other delegates representing the International Disability Alliance. Together, they identified priorities for 2024 and beyond, including the development of an informal network of displaced and stateless persons with disabilities.

LGBTIQ+

At least 23 LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists were among the participants of the GRF, including organizations directly invited by UNHCR, and those participating as part of a State or NGO delegation. Amongst the 108 displaced and stateless participants whose participation was directly funded by UNHCR, at least 4 per cent disclosed a non-binary or gender non-conforming identity.

Refugee child participation

6 What will you do after the Global Refugee Forum?

CHILDREN WANT TO BE INFORMED ABOUT DECISIONS AND WANT TO HOLD ADULTS TO ACCOUNT FOR IMPLEMENTING PLEDGES.

"Guarantee the commitment to follow up on the proposals and demands... beyond a photo".
Refugee girl, 16, from Venezuela, in Peru

"Establish a monitoring system to ensure the effective implementation of government pledges concerning refugees, rather than just hosting forum."
Refugee children's group, Lebanon, when asked to suggest a recommendation to the GRF organizers

"Children are the future, and our dreams are full of peace, education, and endless possibilities."
Refugee boy, 12, Iraq

18

For the first time ever, refugee children, children with lived experience of forced displacement, and a host community child representative participated in the GRF, announcing pledges in plenary and sharing their experiences and demands at high-level parallel events and the Speakers' Corner. In the lead-up to the GRF 2023, 434 refugee children from eleven countries participated in a series of consultations organized by the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, of which UNHCR is a part. Children were informed about the GRF and asked what matters most to them so that the GRF organizers, governments, and other GRF participants could listen to what they had to say. The outcomes of these consultations were documented in "Our Call For Answers: Children's manifesto to the GRF 2023". The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compact also organized a follow-up event, sponsored by the Government of Greece, so that children who were part of these consultations could share their needs, priorities, and recommendations.

GRF plenary

Opening

The opening plenary commenced with a performance by UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Cate Blanchett and, Oscar-winning actor and former refugee, Mr. Ke Huy Quan. Following remarks by the GRF co-host and co-convening countries, a session "Broadening the Base of Support" to focus on multi-stakeholder actors was moderated by Ms. Aisha Khurram, a refugee student leader. During this session, the joint refugee statement was presented by Ms. Adhieu Achuil Dhieu, member of the UNHCR Advisory Board representing MonyQadow. The statement was prepared through a comprehensive six-month drafting process led by the Advisory Board and included written and online consultations with displaced and stateless persons and their organizations across all regions. It was endorsed by 175 organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

Ms. Adhieu Achuil Dhieu reading the Joint Refugee Statement on December 13th at the GRF 2023 Opening plenary session "Broadening the Base of Support." © UNHCR/Baz Ratner

The statement advocated for the rights of all forcibly displaced and stateless communities and called for all stakeholders to be accountable to the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), especially on their commitments to comprehensive responses, meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and localization efforts. See the full version of the Joint Refugee Statement in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic, and the List of endorsing organizations.

Ms. Aisha Khurram, refugee student leader, moderating the Broadening the Base of Support GRF Opening plenary. © UNHCR/Markel Redondo

GCR in Action: multi-stakeholder pledge announcements

Over the course of the three days of the GRF 2023, 17 out of 34 (53%) of the multi-stakeholder pledges were announced in plenary by forcibly displaced and stateless participants, the majority of whom had been engaged in the respective pledge.

Nyakuma Peter Gatkuoth Riak, Executive Director of Together South Sudan and refugee expert, announces the Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention multi-stakeholder pledge at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. © UNHCR/Baz Ratner

Madiha Ali Changezi, member of the New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel and refugee expert, announces the Resettlement multi-stakeholder pledge at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. © UNHCR/Baz Ratner

Closing conversation with displaced and stateless women leaders

The GRF closing plenary included a 30-minute conversation moderated by Ms. Hala Haj Taleb, graduate of the UNHCR Journalism Mentorship Programme for Refugees, between the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, and three forcibly displaced and stateless women leaders: Ms. Noor Azizah, Refugee expert and Co-Founder and Director, Rohingya Maìyafuìnor Collaborative Network; Ms. Najeeba Wazefadost, Chief Executive Director, Asia Pacific Network of Refugees and member of the UNHCR Advisory Board of Organizations led by Displaced and Stateless Persons; and Ms. Agnes Lomoro, Refugee advisor to the Government of Canada and to the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, and healthcare worker. The conversation was focused on their reflections on the GRF and recommendations on charting the way forward. Responding to the panellists' call for a more "systematic" approach, the High Commissioner committed that UNHCR would actively strive to enhance the systematic engagement in

UNHCR's field operations, where meaningful refugee participation is the most critical.

Speakers at the final plenary and Closing Ceremony of the Global Refugee Forum 2023. © UNHCR/Will Swanson

GRF ecosystem

The GRF ecosystem included high-level parallel events, a speakers' corner, and exhibitions at the Palexpo, as well as near 50 linked events held at various locations around Geneva and beyond.

High-level parallel events

Out of a total of 40 high-level parallel events, 35 (88 per cent) featured displaced and stateless speakers, showcasing their impactful contributions. Among the 454 speakers in these events, 67 were displaced and stateless speakers, constituting 15 per cent of the entire speaker lineup.

The dedicated high-level parallel event "Meaningful Refugee Participation: How Partnerships with Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People Improve Policies and Solutions" took place on 14 December 2023 to demonstrate how meaningful participation improves humanitarian responses. The event was co-organized with the Advisory Board to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnership with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons and brought together over 300 attendees. Panel One included Member States (New Zealand, Brazil), NGOs (Oxfam), and the private sector (Ingka Group - IKEA Retail) and shared how the participation of forcibly displaced and stateless persons improves the quality of the humanitarian response and their own outcomes. Panel Two heard directly from forcibly displaced and stateless leaders (RRLI, Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT), Forcibly Displaced People Network (FDPN),

Jóvenes Contra la Violencia, and Dadaab Response Association (DRA) on how they are participating in the development of solutions, leading responses globally and on the ground.

At the end of the high-level parallel event, the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) and Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) formally announced the launch of the Coalition on Meaningful Refugee Participation, with the Netherlands and Australia as State co-chairs. The Coalition is intended to be a space for stakeholders to exchange on, map, and promote good practices, and to develop an advocacy strategy to achieve specific objectives toward realizing meaningful participation. Germany announced it would join the Refugee Participation pledge and is creating a national refugee advisory board.

High-level event on meaningful refugee participation in responses to forced displacement at the GRF. 2023. © UNHCR/Will Swanson.

© UNHCR/Baz Ratner

Speakers' corner

The Speakers' Corner provided stakeholders an opportunity to share good practices that could be supported and scaled up in advancing the objectives of the GCR. Thirty-six per cent of all Speakers' Corner speakers had lived experience of forced displacement and statelessness (19/53). *All recordings can be found here.*

Safe space

Based on repeated calls made by displaced and stateless persons and their organizations, a dedicated Safe Space for forcibly displaced and stateless participants was made available at the GRF venue for the first time. Its purpose was to offer a space for participants to seek a calm space, professional psycho-social support, and counselling. The space was attended by around 25 visitors who received counselling services or simply used the space to ease tension after sessions or interventions that may have been distressing.

The "R-Space" (Linked events)

A key space for refugee-led linked events was the "R-Space", a multipurpose space for representatives of refugee-led organizations and refugee leaders to freely organize events, workshops, performances, networking opportunities, and other activities from 12 to 15 December 2023. It was organized by Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table, Global Refugee-led Network, Asylum Access, Resourcing Refugee Leadership Initiative, Asia Pacific Network of Refugees, and Refugees International. The R-Space featured a parallel programme of 40 sessions led by refugees and addressing issues of priority to them, with support from Open Society Foundations and Robert Bosch Stiftung, as well as joined by Porticus, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and Local Engagement Refugee Research Network. An estimated 300 people came to the space per day. The initiative was perceived by refugees to provide a genuinely refugee-led space that also enabled refugees not part of GRF delegations to participate.

GRF screening events in the field

GRF public screening sessions were organized by UNHCR with and for refugees who were unable to travel to Geneva, including in refugee camps and settlements in Burundi (Bujumbura, Kinama camp, Bwagiriza camp with 250 participants), Ethiopia (Jijiga and Gambella with 75 participants), Kenya (Kakuma with 250 participants), Rwanda (UNHCR offices in Kabarore, Huye, Karongi, and Kirehe, Kigali Gikondo community center, Nyamata-Gashor ETM, and Kirehe District Hall with some 205 participants), and Somalia (UNHCR offices in Bossaso and Hargeisa with some 20 participants). The screenings were attended by various stakeholders, including refugees and displaced people, government officials, UN agencies, private sector actors, local authorities, and financial service providers. Refugee participants appreciated the opportunity to follow the event and see how various stakeholders came together to pledge support to displaced people. In some locations, they also seized the opportunity to advocate for displaced people's rights and access to social services.

Pledges on meaningful participation

Originally launched at the first GRF in 2019, the multi-stakeholder pledge on Refugee Participation, co-led by the Global Refugee-led Network, Oxfam International, and Independent Diplomat, counted 71 new pledge contributions, and over 100 signatories, including Member States, private sector partners, local and international NGOs, organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, and international financial institutions.

Amplifying recommendations from leaders of refugee-led organizations

Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT), in collaboration with Mobilisation Lab and Data 4 Change, brought to life the "We're All In. Are You?" campaign during the GRF. This initiative highlighted the recommendations of 10 refugee-led organizations around the world that could not attend the GRF in Geneva in person. It aimed to ensure that decision-makers at the GRF could learn about their recommendations and insights. The refugee leaders shared actionable recommendations across six key thematic areas: Jobs and Livelihoods, Health, Gender and Diversity, Digital Connectivity, Education, and Third Country Solutions. The featured organizations included: Build Refugees Hope, Apoyo a Migrantes Venezolanos AC, Geutanyoe Foundation, Molham Volunteering Team, Asociación Venezuela en Ecuador AC; Tawakal Youth Organization, Community Support Initiative for Refugees (CoSIR), Global Rohingya Future; Sawiyan Foundation, and Multi Aid Programs. Recommendations were made visible in the GRF digital exhibition space, through banners presented during related high-level parallel events, and across strategic locations in the city of Geneva.

Communications

Refugee journalists

Ten graduates from the UNHCR Journalism Mentorship Programme (JMP) and four additional refugee journalists participated in the GRF and contributed through various activities, including:

- Live coverage of the GRF, e.g., contributing to the dynamic UNHCR Live Blog
- Speaking engagements in four high-level parallel events, advocating for refugee inclusion and meaningful participation, and moderation of the conversation with refugees in the closing plenary
- Conducting interviews with key figures such as the CEO of MBRGI, Dr. Abdulkareem al Olama; UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi; Director of the Vodafone Foundation, Lisa Felton; and CEO of the IKEA Foundation, Jessica Anderen
- Journalists from the Refugee Journalism Project secured coverage in BBC Arabic and BBC News Dari, and one of the UNHCR journalism mentees was interviewed for the BBC's Happy Pod, Global News Podcast
- Active participation in GRF pledges on education, youth, mental health, and gender-based violence, and facilitation of sessions at linked events, such as the Education Campus

Panel on ethical reporting on refugees

A linked event, “Ethical and Inclusive Refugee Reporting – Charting a way forward for media” was jointly organized by UNESCO and UNHCR. It shared good practices from media on creating inclusive newsrooms, strengthening editorial policies for fact-based and balanced reporting on refugees, recognizing refugees as relevant and respected audiences, and fostering dialogue. The interactive session featured interventions from refugee participants, media outlets, and media development organizations and was co-moderated by Nhial Deng, refugee advocate and storyteller, and George Tarr, job developer and JMP.

VIP social media zone

An ambitious, multi-booth VIP Social Media Zone welcomed more than 60 VIPs from governments and the private sector, as well as GWAs and refugees. They participated in quick-reply or sit-down interviews with refugee journalists, delivered their message in a 30-second “open mic”, generated poetry through AI, and kicked a goal with refugees in the sports area. The Social Media Section partnered with the NGO Artolution to commission an art piece for the Zone created by refugees in GRF co-convening countries Jordan, Uganda and Colombia, as well as Bangladesh.

© UNHCR/Jose Cendon

Solidarity cloak

The ‘Solidarity Cloak’ was showcased throughout the Global Refugee Forum. Symbolizing the solidarity felt by hundreds of thousands of people across the world, it was made by a French based non-profit organization – Espero Atelier – that builds pathways to jobs for refugees. The designers and creators behind the

cloak are refugees originally from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Ukraine. They found a new home in France and a new hope through working at this fashion house. The cloak was worn by Goodwill Ambassador Miyavi at the UNHCR Nansen Award and then exhibited at the GRF. The cloak, embroidered with the word "Home" in several languages, promotes the Hope Away From Home campaign and represents 1.1 million people who signed the petition in solidarity with people *#ForcedToFlee*.

© UNHCR/Baz Ratner

National-level participation highlights

At the GRF 2023, 14 States[4] included one or more refugees in their official government delegation, many of them assuming the roles of refugee advisors. In total, 23 refugee representatives participated as part of these 14 delegations, constituting a significant improvement from the first GRF in 2019, which saw only one state, Canada, attend with a refugee advisor. Those States that have established national refugee advisory bodies (Australia Refugee Advisory Panel, United States Refugee Advisory Board, New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel, Refugee Advisory Network Canada, and the French Académie pour la participation des personnes réfugiées) invited refugee advisors from the respective bodies to their GRF 2023 delegations. During the GRF 2023, three new States – Brazil, Switzerland, and Germany – committed to creating refugee advisory mechanisms at the national level.

[4] *These are: Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America.*

Several States and other stakeholders, such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, and the IFRC shared their speaking time in plenary and other events with their respective refugee advisors, another emerging good practice in the realm of refugee participation.

Excerpt from the Government of New Zealand's statement delivered by Paula Santacruz, New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel:

"New Zealand is acutely aware that refugees should be partners in decision-making that affects their futures. Nationally, we have worked with domestic and international partners to establish a Refugee Advisory Panel, which gives New Zealand's refugee community a voice on matters that impact them. I am here today as a member of this panel and a member of the New Zealand Government delegation to the GRF. This is only the beginning of our journey to ensure refugees are shaping solutions and responses. New Zealand pledges to strengthen the Panel's influence over refugee policy and programmes; to support members like me to participate in government delegations to bring our voices to discussions on our futures; and to create new approaches to realize meaningful refugee participation locally, regionally, and nationally."

III. Charting the way forward: meaningful participation in the GRF follow-up process

The Global Refugee Forum was for, about, and to a large extent convened with forcibly displaced and stateless persons. The 320-plus refugee participants who joined the event in person at the Palexpo in Geneva contributed in different capacities: from presenting their priorities through the joint refugee statement during the high-level opening ceremony, announcing multi-stakeholder pledges to which they contributed, sharing their expertise as speakers in high-level parallel sessions and linked events, showcasing good practices in the Speakers' Corner, and acting as advisors to government and other stakeholder delegations. We saw not only a major increase in the number of refugee participants from the first GRF in 2019 (from 70 to over 320) but also their more sustained participation throughout the entire GRF process and greater focus on their subject matter expertise as evidenced by their engagement in multi-stakeholder pledge development.

With a view to including their recommendations and needs in the GRF follow-up processes (lessons learned process, pledge implementation and reporting, and roadmap towards the High-Level Officials Meeting 2025), UNHCR organized two online debrief sessions in January 2024 that were open to all forcibly displaced and stateless GRF 2023 participants. These sessions were complemented by a survey to capture detailed feedback and recommendations.

In the spirit of sustained and meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people, multi-stakeholder pledges leaders who included refugee advisors or organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the development

of the pledges remain committed to continuing engagement in pledge implementation and monitoring processes leading to the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) 2025. Refugee advisory mechanisms to multi-stakeholder pledges to render meaningful participation more systematic, and inclusion of organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the pledge leadership structure are emerging as good practices.

Going forward until December 2024, the Advisory Board to UNHCR's Task Team on Engagement and Partnerships with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons will continue to play a crucial role guiding UNHCR, by sharing their insights and recommendations on how to strengthen collaboration at global level with organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, contributing to the GCR processes and initiatives, and advising on meaningful participation.

Another promising trend is the increasing establishment of refugee advisory bodies at the country level to ensure expertise-based and sustained engagement in national and local policy-making processes. At the GRF 2023, three new countries committed to creating such participation mechanisms: Brazil, Germany, and Switzerland.

The newly launched Coalition on Meaningful Refugee Participation, with the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) and Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) as interim co-chairs, and Australia and the Netherlands as State co-chairs, will play a crucial role in mobilizing action towards meaningful participation in policy and programming that affect refugees and holding stakeholders that pledged towards meaningful participation accountable.

Promoting meaningful participation in GRF 2023 processes did not come without challenges. Key barriers to participation and recommendations on how to overcome them were documented to inform future GCR/GRF-related activities. The main challenges included visa and travel document issues, language barriers, limited or insufficient internet access and/or availability of a technical device to participate in preparatory and learning phases as well as online meetings, time zone differences, physical accessibility problems at the GRF venue, family or work obligations, and loss of income. UNHCR continues to identify how best to promote and realize meaningful participation, and more needs to be done to ensure that refugees participate in a meaningful manner, recognizing that participation is central to finding sustainable and more effective solutions to forced displacement and statelessness. As highlighted by the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Ms. Gillian Triggs, during the 74th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, displaced and stateless people "are agents of change and should have a seat at the table… It is both a moral imperative and the smart thing to do."

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared through the collaboration of the UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees Coordination Team, Division of External Relations, and the Division of International Protection who together comprise the Task Team on Engagement and Partnerships with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons. We express our immense gratitude to all forcibly displaced and stateless GRF 2023 participants for their continuous contributions, courage, and the countless learnings we gained from and with them. We extend special recognition to the Advisory Board of the Task Team on Engagement and Partnerships with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons. Their invaluable insights and guidance have enriched our understanding and practice of meaningful participation in the context of the GRF and beyond. Not only have their contributions shaped this report, but they have also propelled us forward in our collective pursuit of more meaningful participation.

MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED AND STATELESS PERSONS IN THE GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM (GRF) 2023

March 2024

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