



*Committee on Development
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
Subcommittee on Human Rights*

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MISSION REPORT

following the *ad-hoc* delegation to the to the Global Refugee Forum, Geneva, Switzerland, 15- 18 December 2019

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I. Background, objective and overview of the delegation

The Committees on Development (DEVE), Civil Liberties (LIBE) and the Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) travelled as a European Parliament *ad hoc* delegation to the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) held in Geneva (Switzerland) from 15 to 18 December 2019, and were integrated as part of the overall EU Delegation. The GRF is the first follow-up forum after the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees, convened at ministerial level and set to be organised every four years. The European Parliament has closely followed the process of adopting the UN Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees since their beginnings. In September 2016 the Parliament participated in the New York Summit which adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and officially launched the process of elaborating the Global Compacts. Since then, the European Parliament has monitored the process through plenary and committee debates, inter-parliamentary meetings, fact-finding missions. In April 2018, a resolution on the Global Compacts was adopted by a large majority¹. Further, a European Parliament delegation participated in the Intergovernmental Conference for adopting the Global Compact for Migration in Marrakesh in December 2018². The delegation to the GRF sought to ensure continuation of Parliament's work on the Compacts, by participating in the official programme, as well as in spotlight sessions and other events, and by holding several bilateral meetings with different national delegations and stakeholders. These activities aimed to inform and advance Parliament's activities in support of international human rights law, its role, including as co-legislator, on issues related to forced displacement and asylum, and to EU's external action, notably to support refugees and host communities through development and humanitarian assistance.

A constitutive and preparatory meeting for the *ad-hoc* delegation took place in Brussels on 12 November 2019. Daniel Endres, UNHCR Director of the GRF attended as main guest. The European Commission, led by DG ECHO (with contributions from DG DEVCO and DG NEAR), and the European External Action Service also participated. Mr Endres set out briefly the landscape in which the GRF is taking place: 85% of the world's refugees live in developing countries, while other countries are asked to share the responsibility and take in, through resettlement, a (still small) number of vulnerable cases. He highlighted the currently challenging landscape on resettlement, notably as the US has significantly scaled down its programme, and welcomed the announced 30,000 resettlement places pledged by the EU for 2020. He also mentioned the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) facility, which the UNHCR set up in late 2017 with EU support, to allow persons to be evacuated from Libya to Niger (since the start of the ETM) and also to Rwanda (since September 2019), and subsequently resettled, mainly to EU countries. He mentioned that the ETM could be further sped up and numbers increased (some 2,000 evacuees had been resettled from Niger so far). Mr Endres highlighted how the GRF is organised together with relevant stakeholders representing different interests, including refugees themselves. He welcomed the active participation of the EU delegation, including Parliament, and mentioned the different options for such participation, in the official GRF programme as well as side events. He mentioned that, in line with the Global Compact, the GRF aims to receive formal pledges and contributions, as well as to highlight key achievements and good practices. It also seeks to encourage comprehensive responses,

¹ European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2018 on progress on the UN Global Compacts for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and on Refugees ([2018/2642\(RSP\)](#))

² [Mission report](#) following the *ad-hoc* delegation to the Intergovernmental Conference for adopting the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Marrakesh, Morocco, 9-11 December 2018

especially for protracted displacement crises, linking short term humanitarian support with longer term development support for refugees as well as the hosting countries and communities and promoting integration. He explained the relevance of the six focus areas of the GRF – i) burden and responsibility-sharing; ii) education; iii) jobs and livelihoods; iv) energy and infrastructure; v) solutions; and v) strengthening protection capacity –noting with regard to education that half of the world’s refugees are children, of which 4,000,000 do not currently have access to education. Members stressed the importance for the EU to step-up efforts to increase its protection capacity in its external and internal actions, notably by expanding its offer for resettlement places.

Ms Leonor Nieto León, Head of Unit for Humanitarian Aid Thematic Policies, DG ECHO, detailed the steps taken by Commission services to prepare a document detailing the EU contributions to the six thematic focus areas of the GRF. No new commitments were foreseen for the GRF, but Ms Nieto León highlighted that, for the Commission, the Forum sets the pace for progress in the next decade, and noted that the 70.8 million people forcibly displaced today is double the level recorded 20 years ago. On the practicalities, the Commission noted that there was no confirmation so far on speaking slots for the EU, nor any clarity on the Commission’s representation in Geneva and promised to get back to the Parliament on this and the possible modalities for Members’ participation in the Forum. The preparatory meeting was followed by a joint LIBE-DEVE-DROI exchange of views with Mr Endres and Commission in preparation for the GRF. Mr Endres again outlined the objectives of the Forum, the important role of the EU in turning commitments into reality, as well as the importance of Parliament, in view of its legislative powers, to increase protection capacity inside the EU, to increase financial and political engagement with host countries and to address the root causes of displacement, whilst striking a balance between the use of the different tools available to the EU to help refugees in its internal and external policies.

Once in Geneva, the *ad-hoc* delegation was briefed by the Deputy Head of the EU delegation to the UN in Geneva, Ambassador Carl Hallergard. The main part of the briefing was devoted to providing an overview of existing EU contributions to the GRF – as detailed in a document prepared by the European Commission and mentioned during the preparatory meeting. The document listed past EU activities and contributions on the six thematic areas of the GRF, without containing any substantial new pledges. The European Parliament delegation was not given access to the document, despite repeated requests - the matter is now being followed up at inter-institutional level. Furthermore, no common EU statement had been negotiated ahead of the GRF with EU Member States. Concerning EU contributions, Ambassador Hallergard mentioned, *inter alia*, EU support to refugee hosting countries, particularly around Syria, support to EU Member States facing migratory challenges, strengthening evidence-based action, including through direct support for the UNHCR-World Bank Data Centre, and EU engagement to increase refugees’ access to education in host countries. Members asked about: returns to Libya but did not get further clarifications in the absence of specific references to this issue in the Commission document - which only stressed the need for evacuation to be accelerated; the Venezuela situation – with more than 4 million persons having left the country and being hosted mostly by Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brasil. The briefing was also attended by Henriette Geiger, Director for People and Peace in DG DEVCO. She noted that the Refugee Compact had no financial mechanism attached to it, so the burden for implementation rests solely with UN Member States. In this regard she noted also the importance of a coherent EU voice, and the challenges posed by the salience of forced displacement and migration in recent

years, which the EU tried to address through Trust Funds, created as emergency measures. Now – in light of the new political and financial cycle starting in Brussels – this needs to be reviewed with the objective of focussing less on quantity and speed of funds and more on the quality (evaluation of programmes), feedback from partners, and addressing longer-term structural objectives (e.g. demographic transition in Africa).

The *ad-hoc* delegation participated in the formal proceedings of the GRF, notably the opening plenary session, as well as several “spotlight sessions” with different geographic (see below, Syria crisis, Africa, Latin America) or thematic focus (humanitarian-development nexus, measuring impacts, local authorities, child refugees, environment and displacement, resettlement and complementary pathways). The Chair of the delegation, Ms Björk, intervened from the floor, representing the European Parliament, during the “Response to the Syrian crisis” event organised by the European Commission, and made a presentation at the GRF Speakers’ Corner on “Increasing resettlement as a humanitarian protection tool – Challenges and achievements in the EU”. The *ad-hoc* delegation also held bilateral meetings with national delegations (Germany, Canada, Switzerland, Niger, Finland, Uganda, Rwanda), NGOs (Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, Save the Children) and refugees themselves (Refugee-led Network). It also met with Antonio Vitorino, Director General of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Pascale Moreau, Director for Bureau for Europe for UNHCR. The full programme of the delegation can be found in the Annex.

II. Findings of the delegation

The main objective of the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) was to advance international commitments made in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), one year after its adoption. Commitments were structured around six thematic areas: i) burden and responsibility-sharing; ii) education; iii) jobs and livelihoods; iv) energy and infrastructure; v) solutions; and vi) strengthening protection capacity. UN Member States, international organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders were all invited to make financial and non-financial pledges. A table listing the existing 879 pledges is available in UNHCR’s GRF online platform³ while the content of all pledges is expected to become public by end of February 2020. As noted above the EU did not make substantial new commitments, but provided UNHCR with an aggregate of the contributions and actions carried out so far in support of the GRF, which were shared with the delegation.

Opening plenary session

The plenary segment of the GRF – running throughout the two days – provided the opportunity for participants to announce their pledges. Members followed the formal opening of the plenary from within the Assembly Hall. High-level representatives of the five co-convenors spoke at this session: Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of Costa Rica; Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan; Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia; Heiko Maas, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany; and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkey. In addition, António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General and Filippo Grandi, United

³ <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/channel/pledges-contributions>

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees intervened, as well as the co-host, Switzerland, represented, by Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor.

Costa Rica highlighted the importance of fulfilling the commitments in the GRF, but also to examine the links with the migration compact as challenges to host countries as well as needs and human rights of migrants and refugees are common, despite their different legal status. Costa Rica has the highest per capita immigration rate in Latin America, and received an important number of asylum requests from Nicaraguans fleeing the political crisis in the country – 70,000 in 2018-19 for a total Costa Rican population of 5 million people. The Pakistani Prime Minister, whose country is host to 1.4 million registered refugees, many for over 40 years, noted the importance of prevention, highlighting the worrying situation in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Ethiopia highlighted the important changes made to its refugee law in 2019 (see below, section on *Africa*), and noted the changing drivers of displacement, notably the impact of climate change. Germany, the only country belonging to both top ten donor and to top ten hosting countries, noted that the current crisis is not of refugees, but of international cooperation and stressed that the country will keep its funding commitments to UNHCR, and step-up humanitarian and development assistance, but also increase its offer for resettlement places. The Turkish President stressed that Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees in the world – 3.4 million – and maintains an open policy that allows refugees access to education and health services. However, he also stressed that the efforts of host countries will not suffice and the GRF should be instrumental in advancing commitments from the international community, whilst criticising the EU for not providing sufficient support. Lastly, he emphasised the need for a political solution to the Syrian conflict that can allow peaceful and voluntary returns, while justifying Turkish invasion of north-east Syria on the basis of countering terrorism.

In addition to the plenary, the GRF was structured around “spotlight” (thematic) sessions on different topics, including a focus on regional refugee situations, which the delegation Members attended.

Syria situation

One such regional situation which was raised and debated at several occasions was that of Syria. Different sessions shed light on the impact of this crisis on neighbouring countries – Turkey, Lebanon and, to a lesser extent, Jordan – and the response and solutions provided by the EU and international partners. With regard to Lebanon, a country of 6 million people which hosts 900,000 Syrians – and a total of 1.3 to 1.5 million refugees namely the highest refugee number per capita level in the world - a government representative outlined the challenges which the arrival of Syrians posed to the state apparatus, as Lebanon became a country of asylum. He stated that, whilst well-managed, small-scale, arrivals can have a positive economic impact, also in the regional context, overall the negative economic impact in Lebanon has been much greater than the positive one. Many Syrians moved to urban settings and resorted to informal arrangements for housing, but this soon reached its limits and resulted in vulnerabilities for displaced people. The government, whose budget has been strained due to additional expenditure related to hosting Syrians, is working with UNHCR and NGOs to tackle long term issues, which prove also politically sensitive (e.g. integration to the labour market). Efforts are being made to allow refugees access to education, and vocational training to both refugees and host communities as a way to minimise potential tensions. Nonetheless, the current economic crisis – which is already driving Syrians to return in view of the poor job prospects in Lebanon

– risks becoming a full political crisis and the destabilisation of Lebanon, which could further impact Syria. Again, the emphasis of the Lebanese government representative was placed on both responsibility sharing – donor financial commitments, but also on the need to make efforts to step-up currently “anaemic” resettlement pledges for vulnerable refugees from hosting countries – and on finding durable solutions, notably voluntary returns to Syria. During with the bilateral meeting with the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Danish Refugee Council (more details below), the organisations noted that until a durable solution to the Syrian conflict is found, humanitarian needs inside the country remain high and that efforts should be made to meet the needs of the population, regardless of who might control the territory.

The spotlight session on “Response to the Syrian crisis – Delivering Results in Partnership”, organised by the European Commission, with speakers representing the Turkish and Jordanian government, UNICEF and Jordanian and Lebanese NGOs, also examined the impact of the crisis in these three neighbouring countries, and the international response. Whilst the responsibility for responding should be a shared one, in reality frontline countries have carried the greatest burden, with impacts on their public services - hospitals stretched to the limit, schools running two or three shifts to accommodate refugee children - and their economy. Guests emphasised the importance of education and training – sectors to which donors dedicate an important share of their funds – in order to allow for livelihoods opportunities to be created, and also to facilitate their return to Syria when the situation allows for this. The issue of voluntary returns to Syria was a politically salient issue for the *ad-hoc* delegation given the emphasis put on this by countries like Turkey and Lebanon, and the Parliament’s position that “any return of refugees must be safe, voluntary and dignified and that the current circumstances are such as to categorically prevent such movements”⁴. This issue was mentioned by the Chair of the delegation during the EU spotlight session on the Syrian crisis, where she reiterated the European Parliament’s position of rejection of Turkey’s plans to establish a so-called safe zone along the border in North-East Syria and that any forcible transfer of Syrian refugees or internally displaces persons (IDPs) to this area would constitute a violation of international law and the principle of non-refoulement⁵. This issue further explored, in light of NGO reports documenting coerced returns, during the bilateral meeting with Pascale Moreau, Director for Bureau for Europe, UNHCR. During this meeting Ms Moreau noted that UNHCR had monitored 75,000 people returning from Turkey to Syria (out of an estimated total of 300,000) and had not found open instances of coercion.

Africa

The African continent was another of the regional contexts on which were centred a number of discussions through the GRF. In addition to the situation in Libya and the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) – closely linked to the EU commitments to burden-sharing and discussed below – the delegation attended the launch of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Support Platform, focussed on the Horn of Africa and a spotlight session on “Addressing Forced Displacement in Africa”. The Ethiopian and Egyptian interventions underlined that the majority of refugees in the countries (70% in the Egyptian case) come from countries facing protracted refugee situations. Once inside the country, their situations vary depending on national legislation. In Egypt, the representative of the government stated that

⁴ European Parliament resolution of 24 October 2019 on the Turkish military operation in northeast Syria and its consequences (2019/2886(RSP))

⁵ *Ibid*

refugees enjoy freedom of movement and can access education at equal level with Egyptians and benefit from similar benefits as nationals.

In Ethiopia, the government representative stated that the 2019 revision of refugee laws – implementing the commitments made in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) – resulted in one of the continent’s most progressive policies, easing restrictions on freedom of movement and allowing refugees to obtain work permits, access primary education, register births and marriages, access banking services and obtain a driving license. A key point stressed repeatedly was on the need to provide access to livelihoods (jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities) that can foster refugees’ self-reliance. Improving the welfare of refugees and their access to basic services like health and education, but also to housing and energy, should go hand in hand with the strengthening of these sectors in a manner that can benefit refugees and host communities alike, so as to favour the inclusion of refugees in communities. These are often costly interventions, which should be supported by the international community and addressed in longer-term, development interventions. As noted also above, in relation to the Syrian crisis, tackling the “root causes” of displacement – namely, ending conflicts – is however essential for sustainable solutions. This issue was also emphasised by the Nigerian representatives during the bilateral meeting with the delegation, in which they stressed the worrying situation in the Sahel region as instability caused by armed and terrorist groups is spreading in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger itself.

Among the delegation’s bilateral meetings, Uganda was the largest-hosting developing country (1.4 million refugees). Hilary Oniek, Ugandan Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees reiterated the country’s continued commitment to an open-door policy and hopes on the potential of the GRF. He also nevertheless highlighted that, in view of such instability in its neighbourhood (DRC, South Sudan), continued international support would be needed to allow the government to maintain the current level of support. Refugees in Uganda receive a piece of land to allow for small-scale cultivation and can access education and health services at the same level of Ugandan nationals with whom refugees live side-by-side. At the same time, the large number of refugees represents not only a strain on the Ugandan social services budget, but also an important infrastructure and environmental challenge as roads are damaged by increased use, and the energy needs of refugees (wood for cooking) results in unsustainable deforestation. It is therefore necessary – the Minister underlined – that longer-term support for national development is maintained, together with more targeted interventions for concrete challenges (such as the provision of energy-saving stoves for refugee settlement being currently done). The environmental impact which refugees have on the host country was also raised by the Rwandan delegation, during the bilateral meeting. They highlighted the footprint which the six refugee camps hosting 150,000 refugees has in terms of energy (wood) consumption, agriculture (higher food demands) and pollution.

Latin America

A last regional context discussed through the GRF and by the delegation was the situation in Latin America. This was touched upon during the meeting with the Swiss delegation, and Antonio Vitorino, Director General of IOM, also listed during the meeting with the ad-hoc delegation, Venezuela as one of the priority crises for his organisation as there are currently 4.5 million Venezuelans forced to leave their country and the number is expected to reach 6.5 million by the end of 2020 if current trends continue. This is the world fastest growing

displacement crisis.

Still on the Latin American context, Members of the ad-hoc delegation attended the Special Event on the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework for Central America (MIRPS) which includes Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Panama. This is the most advance regional framework launched by the CRRF and taken over by the Refugee Compact. Two Ministerial meetings have taken place to carry out the MIRPS implementation, the most recent one under the Mexican rotatory presidency right before the GRF. The states intervening in the session reiterated their commitment to the MIRPS but also their limited means, and highlighted the worrying situation in the region, with a growing number of forced and mixed displacement. They emphasised: the need to: i) provide protection to vulnerable people, including easier access to asylum working with UNHCR and NGOs; ii) build institutional capacities, including border management and reception conditions, in the countries concerned; iii) work in all phases of the migration cycle, from root causes of displacement to return and reintegration – Honduras, and also UNICEF raised the issue of the challenges posed by increased returns from the United States, a large part of whom are minors in very precarious situations. NGOs taking part in the event welcomed the high-level of regional cooperation (which has a long tradition), but criticised the sometimes excessively security-focused approach to migration management and requested more funds and capacities for protection systems, and greater cooperation between states and NGOs. The EU praised the multilateral response shown by countries in the region, and reiterated its commitment to continue supporting the MIRPS process as well as a comprehensive development plan for the region.

Protecting the humanitarian space and strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus

An important part of the GRF and the *ad-hoc* delegation's meetings were devoted to the issue of how to improve the quality of the response to refugee situations. One important issue was the need to secure sufficient funding, and space, for humanitarian assistance, and to complement this with longer-term development interventions supporting both refugees and host communities. During the bilateral meeting with Jan Egeland, Secretary General of Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Malthe Mulvad, Head of External Relations Secretariat, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) these issues were explored at length. Both organisations noted the challenging humanitarian situation across the globe, with rapidly growing needs outstripping the small increase in resources, and some of the structural changes which actors committed to carry out at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit not being sufficiently implemented. More worryingly, there is a shrinking space for principled humanitarian work as a result of war, including more frequent violations of International Humanitarian Law, and security concerns. Some provisions of this legislation can make it impossible to make bank transfers for the benefit of organisations providing humanitarian assistance in territories controlled by groups considered to be terrorist organisations. They welcomed the GCR's approach of codifying new ways of doing things, including an emphasis on self-reliance. They also highlighted that the GCR only works by showing it works, and that EU activities need to contribute to this at different levels. First, through financial assistance – both humanitarian (DG ECHO was praised as a principled and careful donor) and development aid, and their interplay (both organisations welcomed steps in this direction). But also by actions inside the EU, notably an open asylum system, and a contribution to global responsibility-sharing (a commitment included in the GRF) through increased resettlement places, even if candidates for resettlement represent only 2 million (the most vulnerable) out of a total of 30 million refugees.

Measuring impacts of refugee situations

NRC also stressed the importance – if the GRF is to be effectively implemented – to develop a new and better measurement of responsibility sharing for forced displacement, for which their organisations were developing a pilot project. This was also central to the discussions in the spotlight session on “Measuring the impact of hosting, protecting, and assisting refugees” which Members of the *ad-hoc* delegation attended. This session stressed the importance of, but also the difficulties in, measuring such impact as there are numerous aspects to take into account. Xavier Devictor, Advisor for the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group at the World Bank, noted that the impact of a large inflow of refugees depends on factors such as how many refugees arriving to which parts of the country, as well as on the pre-existing conditions in the country, and on the government response. Furthermore, the economic impacts affect various sectors of society and economy differently. Further, conflict in a neighbouring country results in negative effects on tourism, investment, trade for the entire region that is difficult to distinguish from the impact of hosting refugees in itself.

The role of local authorities

Another element discussed in various meetings was the important role of local authorities, as these are in the frontline of the response to refugee situations and in promoting social cohesion. These administrations ought to be supported financially, but also by gathering more data on what it means to host refugees at city level, and by supporting bottom-up initiatives for refugee response. During the bilateral meetings with the German delegation and the UNHCR Europe Director this issue was raised as an area with great potential to carry out more actions. A recent meeting, organised by UNHCR, between various cities aimed to encourage the sharing of best practices in responding to the need for hosting refugees. During the meetings with NGOs the issue of awareness-raising and of providing information at the local level was singled out as essential in order to have the acceptance of the population for hosting refugees, thus increasing the possibilities for integration.

Protecting refugee rights, including children’s rights, and promoting refugee self-reliance

Another important topic in how to improve the refugee responses was the need to address the protection needs of refugees (e.g. increasing access to legal aid) and notably those of vulnerable groups like children and people with disabilities, and to involve refugees themselves in these responses. The spotlight session on “Our Commitment to the 52%: how can we make the Global Compact on Refugees work for every child?” counted with the moving testimony of two young refugee representatives, Faridah Luanda, who fled DRC for Uganda after her mother died and now works on advocacy against gender and children violence and early marriages, and Maria Khoshy, an Afghan refugee who travelled overland to Switzerland where she now lives. Participants in the session stressed that ensuring adequate protection for the rights of refugees, notably children, is essential if the GRC is to be implemented. Donors present noted the need to overcome the “silo” approach and to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian and development actions, with a focus on children. This means paying sufficient attention to the protection of children in armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, as well as systematic programming for children protection in multiannual funding programmes and mainstreaming child protection and non-exclusion of children in development programmes. Access to education was highlighted as one of the best protection tools for children, yet less than half refugee of children finish their studies. DG ECHO’s provision of 10% of the total humanitarian

funds education in emergency setting was highlighted as an important, unmatched commitment by any other donor. The role of faith-based actors in ensuring child protection was also stressed as these (unlike international actors / NGOs for example) were already in the communities before the emergency occurred, and will stay behind after it ends.

During the spotlight session on "Promoting partnerships, national protection capacity and the provision of legal aid services", different NGOs and representatives of private law firms and UN bodies, stressed the common interest of refugees, lawyers and public administration to grant effective access to procedure, notably via the provision of free legal aid, in order to allow states to decide on who needs protection. Examples were given where NGOs with relevant experience in providing legal aid to refugees, coordinated large projects involving corporate law firms who provide volunteer lawyers, the latter being trained and supervised in their work by the coordinating NGOs. The importance of inter-disciplinary approaches in building legal aid programmes was more generally stressed, involving the legal community, including bar associations or academia, and refugees themselves, identifying needs and commonalities across jurisdictions, providing legal advice on procedure but also addressing barriers to accessing other, social and economic rights. The importance of rights-awareness among refugees, as well as awareness in all population of refugee rights was also highlighted. Finally, good examples of mobile legal aid desks/or a solidarity bus were mentioned, which allow for reaching refugees in need of legal support who might not be otherwise have access to it. Pledges accounting for more than 125,000 hours of pro bono legal services per year were announced by the legal community, as well as extra resources also for coordination of such services.

Concerning the involvement of refugees, this was central to the spotlight session on “Voices of Refugees” and the bilateral meeting with refugees representing the Global Refugee-led Network. The event on Voices of Refugees had the direct testimony of Ahmad Sufian Bayram, a Syrian Refugee and collaborative economy activist living in Germany, Diego Fernando Narváez, a Colombian refugee student in Ecuador, Joana Ibrahim, Syrian refugee entrepreneur in Brazil, Yasin Jama, Somali refugee Doctor, NGO member in France and Jacqueline Kapinga Bajika Zandamela, Congolese refugee private sector employee in Mozambique. Their interventions stressed the importance of language learning as a central – yet also challenging – aspect of the integration process. Other important messages were the need to establish strong links between refugees and the local community, including through cultural and sport activities, as ultimately integration will depend on these relations. This can also help on fending-off misinformation and xenophobia. The refugees stressed also the need to increase the possibilities for accessing credit (information campaign targeting refugees and banks themselves), the provision of technical and vocational training, and ensuring support for refugee integration also in rural areas, not only urban ones. During a bilateral meeting with the Global refugee-led network, the delegation heard that there was limited participation of refugees themselves in the GRF and reference was made to the [Guidelines on meaningful refugee participation](#) that the network had published. The representatives of the network made an appeal to members of the delegation to involve them in the work of the European Parliament.

Reducing environmental impact of refugee situations, and addressing climate-induced mobility

Another cross-cutting issue for many refugee situations around the world, discussed throughout the GRF, was the environmental one. Two angles can be identified in relation to this: the first

one is the environmental impact which refugees - and the response to refugee situations - have in the host country. As noted above, the negative environmental impacts (use of water, wood, pollution) of large refugee settlements was highlighted during the bilateral meetings with Uganda and Rwanda. This was also noted, for example, by Mohammed Shikhani, Civil Engineer and Refugee Representative, who outlined the situation in Jordan – a country facing a situation of water scarcity which was further aggravated with the arrivals of Syrian refugees - during the spotlight session on “Green responses to refugee situations – Urgent need for sustainable energy solutions”. The latter looked more generally at how to improve humanitarian and development responses to refugee situations, making them more environmentally sustainable. The issue of energy also appeared central in this discussion, with Björn Gillsäter, Head of the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement outlining the need to “green” humanitarian responses and increase the knowledge and data in situations as diverse as Cox’s bazar (Bangladesh, hosting Rohingya refugees), Jordan, or the Sahel. He noted at the same time that moves towards a more sustainable response are already visible: World Bank loans for renewable energy have increased from 7% to 18%. The GRF also provided the occasion for UNHCR to launch its four-year Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy seeking to minimise its own environmental impact. Thirty actors also signed up to UNHCR’s Clean Energy Challenge to achieve access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all refugee settlements and nearby host communities by 2030.

The second angle regarding the environment and refugees, was the impact of climate change on forced displacement, and their complex interaction. The issue was mentioned in numerous interventions and throughout the bilateral meetings held by the delegation. During the spotlight session on “Green responses to refugee situations”, Jan Egeland from the NRC noted that the world is seeing higher levels of displacement due to climatic factors, including in situations such as Syria or Darfour. Antonio Vitorino noted that IOM will soon launch a strategy on climate change and migration, noting that climate change has very diversified impacts on human mobility. For instance, the challenges for people (and entire countries) in the Pacific Islands facing sea-level rise are very different from those in parts of Africa (Sahel, Horn) challenged by water scarcity, at the same time as recurrent floods and cyclones. Vitorino was clear that the idea of recognising “climate refugees” through a revision of the Geneva Convention would not be the appropriate course, as this may undermine the Convention itself. UNHCR also supported this point, noting that a large proportion of climate-displaced people remain within their own country, and noting in this regard the importance of the UN High-Level Panel on Internally Displaced People which will start its work in February 2020. UNHCR recognised the central importance of this issue however, and noted that a new Special Advisor to the High Commissioner on Refugees on Climate Action has been created, with Andrew Harper being appointed to the role. The work being done by the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD) was also discussed at the GRF meetings, as this intergovernmental initiative aims to prevent climate-induced displacement by building resilience, but also ensuring protection of persons displaced across borders by disasters and climatic factors, not through a legal recognition of “refugee-like” status but by promoting regional guidelines and the use of humanitarian protection measures for those people affected.

Resettlement and complementary pathways

The GCR envisages a three-year Strategy (2019 – 2021) on resettlement and complementary pathways, as a key vehicle to increase the number of resettlement spaces, expand the number

of resettlement countries and improve the availability and predictability of complementary pathways. At various bilateral meetings, the delegation heard that, even if resettlement will not solve the global displacement challenges, it does matter for providing sustainable solutions to very vulnerable cases and in terms of political messaging, including to local hosting communities, and the way refugees are seen, once they manage to get a dignified life following their resettlement. NGOs, as well as IOM and UNHCR, also stressed the need to enlarge resettlement against a currently bleak background, given the cutting back of the US resettlement programme, which would only partly be compensated by an increase in pledges from some EU states, Canada, and Australia. It was further reminded, that nearly two thirds of those who flee worldwide, flee within their own country ('internally displaced persons' - IDPs).

Canada's refugee resettlement programme was presented and discussed in the spotlight session on the three-year Strategy and as part of a bilateral meeting with the Canadian delegation. Multi-year resettlement commitments are used by Canada to ensure sustainability and predictability of the country's programme, in line with global resettlement needs. There are three streams in the programme, namely a government-assisted (about one third of the total), a community-supported (so-called 'privately-sponsored', which represents about two thirds of the total and includes family-linked cases) and a "blended visa office-referred refugees" one, with cases referred by UNHCR or another referral organisation, or jointly sponsored by communities and government (this last stream represents a very small proportion of the total). In 2019, approximately 10,000 government-assisted and 19,000 privately sponsored refugees were resettled in Canada. Upon arrival in Canada, refugees become permanent residents and have a pathway to citizenship. It was further stressed that successful integration is key to successful resettlement. More generally, Canada welcomed approximately 1,000,000 new permanent residents in the last three years, including under resettlement but also family reunification, humanitarian schemes, as well as labour migration - which accounts for about 60% of the total.

OECD and UNHCR have looked at data regarding the use of complementary pathways by some refugee populations in selected OECD countries, as part of third country refugee solutions, and concluded that the ratio between asylum-related entry and stay visas compared with non-humanitarian complementary pathways for refugees (family, work, or education-related reasons) is 3:1, which demonstrates the crucial importance of a fair and efficient asylum system. Among complementary pathways, family reunification remains by far the most important one, with Sweden offering the largest such pathway in world. However, latest trends seem in OECD countries show a restriction of family reunification, for example by granting subsidiary status not allowing reunification. The need for resettlement and humanitarian corridors was further highlighted, and examples of good practices where NGOs undertook the relevant processes from beginning to end with no charges for governments were mentioned, also as means for countering smuggling and trafficking. All in all, more than 100 commitments were made at the GRF to expand third-country solutions, such as resettlement, private or community sponsorship, labour mobility schemes, and scholarships for refugees. More than 70 stakeholders pledged on third country solutions, including more than 25 countries. Globally, most pledges towards third country solutions focused on resettlement, community sponsorship and education opportunities. In parallel to the EU pledge of 30,000, the following EU countries also submitted their pledges individually: Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the UK also submitted pledges. Pledges from EU countries focused on the

provision of technical and financial support, as well as on policy commitments and admission of refugees through resettlement and complementary pathways.

Advancing EU responsibility-sharing in light of commitments made in the Global Compact on Refugees

A central point of the delegation was to call for more EU engagement in the international response to forced displacement (see the delegation Press Statement in Annex II). This concerns both the EU's external and internal activities.

On the external side, the European Commission highlighted EU's commitments with refugee-hosting nations, through the provision since 2016 of EUR 8.85 billion in development-focused interventions in support to forcibly displaced persons hosted in third countries, in addition to an important share of its humanitarian assistance (80% of a total of EUR 2.8 billion was devoted to displaced people and host communities for 2018 and 2019). The European Commission also showcased some of this support the EU spotlight session on the "Response to the Syrian crisis – Delivering Results in Partnership", in which the Chair of the EP delegation made a statement.

The EU support for the IOM-UNHCR Emergency Transit Mechanism ("ETM", established in December 2017 and supported through the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa), aimed at evacuating persons from Libya, was discussed in the bilateral meeting with Niger, the country which hosts those evacuees as they wait for resettlement, as well as with Rwanda, where a similar mechanism was set up in September 2019. In the case of Niger, since the launch of the mechanism, 2,900 persons had been resettled (mainly to the EU but also to other countries), more than 50% of whom were women and children, while 2,000 were still waiting for evacuation. An evaluation and relevant reporting was planned to be conducted around the time of the GRF, following which a second phase would be planned. Niger would need more speedy and more flexible procedures (as announced by Sweden ahead of the GRF), as well as the setting up of parallel humanitarian corridors. With Niger and Rwanda hosting, respectively, some 200,000 refugees (notably from Nigeria and Mali) and some 150,000 (notably from Burundi and the DRC), both countries indicated that those hosted under the ETM represent a very small percentage of the refugee population that they both have to manage, while of course welcoming an acceleration of the relevant resettlement process.

On the internal side, the issue of increasing resettlement places as a concrete way to show a sharing of responsibility was highlighted in numerous meetings. In the bilateral meetings of the delegation the issue of EU resettlement efforts was discussed with Canada (see above) and Finland, which informed the delegation in its role as Council presidency of the efforts to secure EU budget support for the approximately 30,000 pledges announced under the next EU resettlement scheme- and with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) - which asked for the Union resettlement framework draft regulation to be adopted speedily, notwithstanding progress of the overall EU asylum system reform. During the spotlight session dedicated to the three-year Strategy, the delegation heard the Commission present EU resettlement numbers, which have tripled since 2015, and the support provided, including by EASO, to less experienced Member States in building and monitoring their resettlement programmes and to traditionally resettling Member States in stepping up their efforts. The EU funding support for resettlement, both for the past EU scheme as well as for the future pledges, was also mentioned, along with EASO activities in the area (recently established resettlement support facility in

Istanbul as a one stop shop, and soon-to-be-launched resettlement and humanitarian admission network for practical cooperation). In the bilateral with Mr Vitorino, the delegation heard about the need to look at other solutions providing safe pathways, in addition to resettlement, as already applied by certain Members such as complementary pathways, humanitarian corridors or humanitarian visas, as well as labour migration options. During the bilateral meetings with NGOs, the lack of an ambitious EU policy on resettlement with decreasing resettlement places, privileging instead financial assistance to third countries, was deplored. Lastly, the EP Delegation Chair (and rapporteur for the EU resettlement framework) made a presentation at the GRF Speakers' Corner on "Increasing resettlement as a humanitarian protection tool – Challenges and achievements in the EU", an opportunity provided by UNHCR which also secured invitation for MEPs to attend the Women Leaders' Lunch.

The importance of intra-EU responsibility sharing and strengthening the EU protection and asylum capacities was also touched at different occasions during the delegation, notably at the bilateral meetings with Germany and Switzerland as well as the NGOs. The importance of financial resources which would match the future asylum and migration instruments was also stressed. NGOs more particularly expressed grave concern over the situation in the Greek islands, notably with regard to the situation of children (guardianship, education), as well as the remarkable difficulty to get legal status across the EU, as well as high barriers for access to education and more generally integration.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

The GRF was a first key step in implementing the GCR, which would need to be properly followed up ahead of the next similar forum to be held in 2023. The delegation welcomes the broad engagement and results of the GRF, with more than 800 pledges from governments, civil society, and the private sector. It notes that one-third of the pledges came from countries in the global south, where most of the world's displaced are already hosted. A summary of pledges as compiled by UNHCR notes pledges in support of inclusive national policies (for example to support 'out of camp' policies and strengthened asylum systems); pledges focused on expanding access to quality education for refugees and their hosts; commitments towards job creation, microfinance, and women's economic empowerment; pledges to support infrastructural services and to support green energy and conservation efforts in areas hosting large numbers of refugees. Pledges focused also on achieving lasting solutions including on integration, voluntary returns, conflict resolution and addressing root causes of displacement, as well as expanding third-country solutions, such as resettlement. In addition to policy pledges, financial commitments, mainly from development actors, were also made to support countries in both responding to refugee situations and implementing inclusive policies. The private sector also made important financial commitments as well as job opportunities for refugees, pro bono legal services, support for education and training, and women's economic empowerment. Many pledges also recognized the importance of protection for individuals with diverse specific needs. They included commitments to address sexual violence, empower women and girls, address disability, and include refugees in decisions that affect them.

The delegation welcomes EU commitments in the six thematic areas of the GRF, namely infrastructure, jobs and livelihood, protection, burden and responsibility sharing, education and solutions, although it notes that no substantial new pledges were made from the EU. Therefore,

the delegation calls on the Commission and the Member States to further step up efforts, both in internal and external policies, to respond to global displacement challenges. With 85% of refugees remaining in their region of origin, the EU should support those communities and countries hosting large refugee populations, both in the short and longer term, with humanitarian and development aid, and also fostering inclusion and integration. The provision of humanitarian and development assistance should at the same time remain independent from all other EU policies and objectives, including those relating to migration. The EU can also play a key role in addressing the root causes of displacement, notably by seeking political solutions to violent conflicts and strengthening early warning and conflict-prevention efforts.

The delegation calls on the Commission and Member States to engage in a discussion towards defining the criteria on which an international agreement on the recognition of the status of climate refugees could be based and principles for assistance to persons potentially recognized as such, as the term “climate refugees” is not based in international law, and does not reflect the many ways in which climate interacts with human mobility. Also, acknowledging the growing impact that collapsing eco-systems and weather-related disasters have on the livelihoods and can contribute to conflict, insecurity and displacement a further integrated climate action and disaster risk reduction should be incorporated into development cooperation.

The EU should also support and encourage Member States to commit to more ambitious resettlement pledges for the most vulnerable refugees, coordinated by UNHCR, as well as humanitarian admission. Support from the EU budget, as it has been the case so far, should also be ensured for the next EU resettlement scheme. The European Parliament, in its position on the EU resettlement framework, has called for increasing resettlement and protection space in the EU, as a humanitarian tool and building on UNHCR important work.

In that respect, the EU should show leadership towards international but also internal, fair responsibility-sharing internal and external policies, and a holistic approach to global displacement challenges that must be people-centred and rights-based, including guaranteeing the right to asylum on EU territory. The next few years will be key; the delegation looks forward to an ambitious future Asylum and Migration Pact announced by the European Commission. At the same time financial instruments in the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework should serve to support such policies. The involvement of different stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, refugee-led organizations, local authorities, faith-based organizations), which is also at the heart of the GRF, is essential for the successful designing and implementation of refugee-related internal and external policies.

Annex I

Secretariat of the Committee on Development
Secretariat of the Subcommittee on Human Rights
Committee for Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs



Ad hoc delegation of the European Parliament to the UN Global Refugee Forum

15-18 December 2019
Geneva (Switzerland)

Final programme

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Sunday 15 December 2019

20:30 Informal internal EP delegation meeting

Monday 16 December 2019

10:00 - 11:30	Spotlight session "Partnership for Addressing Forced Displacement in Africa" Venue: Room XXI, Palace of Nations	Spotlight session "Voices of Refugees" Venue: Room XXIV, Palace of Nations	Spotlight session on "Promoting partnerships, national protection capacity and the provision of legal aid services" Venue: Room XXVI, Palace of Nations
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11:30 - 12:30	Spotlight session "Our Commitment to the 52%: how can we make the Global Compact on Refugees work for every child?" Venue: Room XVII, Palace of Nations	Special event – I GAD support platform (Horn of Africa) Venue: Room XXI, Palace of Nations	11:30-12:15 Spotlight session on "Measuring the impact of hosting, protecting, and Assisting refugees" Venue: Room V, Palace of Nations
13:30 - 14:30	Briefing for MEPs by Ambassador Carl Hallergard, Deputy Head of EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva Venue: EU Delegation		
15:15 - 16:00	Bilateral meeting with Jan Egeland, Secretary General of Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Malthe Mulvad, Head of External Relations Secretariat, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Venue: NRC offices		
16:15 - 16:30	Visit to the EU stand at the marketplace of good practices Venue: Salle des Pas Perdues, Building A, Palace of Nations		
16:30-17:45	Spotlight session "Response to the Syrian crisis – Delivering Results in Partnership" (Organised by the EU) EP statement from the floor by Chair of the Delegation Venue: Room XXI, Palace of Nations	Special event - MIRPS solidarity event - Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework for Central America Venue: Room XIX, Palace of Nations	
18:00 – 18:30	Bilateral meeting with representatives of the Global Refugee-led Network (Anila Noor, Shaza Alrihawi, Mohammed Badran, John Bolingo, Ntahira Murhula, Diana Ortiz Vilorio) Venue: Room E.3025, Palace of Nations		
19:00 - 20:00	Reception drinks hosted by Ambassador Walter Stevens for Commissioner Varhelyi and the EU delegation to		

the Global Refugee Forum, including the European Parliament delegation
Venue: EUDEL

Tuesday 17 December 2019

- 9:00 – 12:30 Opening plenary session
Venue: Assembly Hall, Palace of Nations
- 13:00 - 14:30 Spotlight session Spotlight session “Making
“Green responses to the vision of the Three-Year
refugee situations – Strategy (2019-2021) on
urgent need for Resettlement and
sustainable energy Complementary Pathways a
solutions” reality”
Venue: Room XXII, Palace Venue: Room XXVI, Palace of
of Nations Nations
- 14:30 – 15:15 Meeting with David Miliband, President and CEO of
International Rescue Committee (IRC), Danny
Sriskandarajah, CEO Oxfam Great Britain, and Janti
Soeripto, incoming CEO, Save the Children
Venue: Room Concordia 5, Palace of Nations
- 15:30 – 16:00 Bilateral meeting with Delegation of Germany, led by
Rüdiger König, Director General for Crisis Prevention,
Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian
Assistance, German Foreign Office
Venue: Room Concordia 5, Palace of Nations
- 17:00 – 17:30 Bilateral meeting with Delegation of Canada, led by Mary
Coulter, Migration Counsellor at the Mission of Canada to
the European Union
Venue: Room Concordia 5, Palace of Nations
- 17:45 – 18:15 Bilateral meeting with Delegation of Switzerland, led by
Mario Gattiker, State Secretary, State Secretariat for
Migration
Venue: Room Concordia 5, Palace of Nations
- 18:30 – 19:00 Bilateral meeting with Delegation of Niger, led by Moure
Moctar Chekaraou, Chief of Cabinet of the Minister of
Foreign Affairs
Venue: Room Concordia 5, Palace of Nations

Wednesday 18 December 2019

- 09:00 – 09:30 Bilateral meeting with Antonio Vitorino, Director General, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
Venue: Room Concordia 4, Palace of Nations
- 10:00 – 10:45 Bilateral meeting with Pascale Moreau, Director for Bureau for Europe, UNHCR
Venue: Room Concordia 4, Palace of Nations
- 11:00 – 11:30 Bilateral meeting with Delegation of Finland, led by Johanna Sumuvuori, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs
Venue: Room Concordia 4, Palace of Nations
- 12:30 - 13:00 Bilateral meeting with the Delegation of Uganda, led by Hilary Onek, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees and Jane Ruth Aceng, Minister of Health
Venue: Room Concordia 4, Palace of Nations
- 12:30 - 13:00 Bilateral meeting with Delegation of Rwanda, led by Olivier Kayumba, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Emergency Management
Venue: Room Concordia 4, Palace of Nations
- 13:00 - 15:00 Women leaders' lunch
(Ms. Malin BJÖRK and Ms. Mónica Silvana GONZÁLEZ)
Venue: Palace of Nations, Delegates' Restaurant, private room
- 14:00-14:10 European Parliament's Speakers' Corner: "Increasing resettlement as a humanitarian protection tool – Challenges and achievements in the EU", presentation by Malin BJÖRK, Chair of the Delegation
Venue: Exhibition Gallery, Building E, Palace of Nations
- 15:00 END OF THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

Annex II

Geneva: MEPs call for EU leadership to respond to global displacement challenges

Press Releases 18-12-2019

A European Parliament delegation attended the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva (16-18 December). A majority of MEPs issued the following statement:

“The [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#) is the first concrete step in seeking to advance the commitments made by the international community in the Global Compact on Refugees adopted one year ago. We welcome EU commitments in the six thematic areas of the GRF, namely infrastructure, jobs and livelihood, protection, burden and responsibility sharing, education and solutions, although no substantial new pledges were made from the EU.

The world faces unprecedented levels of refugees and forced displacement largely due to more complex, violent and protracted conflicts, but also natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. The EU can play a key role in addressing the root causes of displacement, notably by seeking political solutions to violent conflicts and strengthening early warning and conflict-prevention efforts. It can also provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and other displaced people, paying special attention to vulnerable groups, especially children and women, and emphasizing the need to respect international humanitarian law.

We call on the Commission and the Member States to further step up efforts, both in internal and external policies, to respond to global displacement challenges. With 85% of refugees remaining in their region of origin, the EU should support those communities and countries hosting large refugee populations, both in the short and longer term, with humanitarian and development aid, and also fostering inclusion and integration.

The EU should also support and encourage Member States to commit to more ambitious resettlement pledges for the most vulnerable refugees, coordinated by UNHCR, as well as humanitarian admission. Political solutions to end conflicts and efforts to stabilize regions of origin are also key for finding sustainable solutions.

The European Parliament, in its position on the EU resettlement framework, has called for increasing resettlement and protection space in the EU, as a humanitarian tool and building on UNHCR important work. The Parliament has also made clear that the provision of humanitarian assistance should remain independent from all other EU policies and objectives, including those relating to migration.

In that respect, the EU should show leadership towards international but also internal, fair responsibility-sharing internal and external policies, and a holistic approach to global displacement challenges that must be people-centered and rights-based, including guaranteeing

the right to asylum on EU territory. The next few years will be key; therefore, financial instruments in the context of the next Multiannual Financial Framework should serve such policies. The involvement of different stakeholders in designing and implementing such policies (NGOs, private sector, refugee-led organizations, local authorities, faith-based organizations), which is also at the heart of the GRF, is essential for their success.

Finally, the delegation calls on the Commission and Member States to engage in a discussion towards defining the criteria on which an international agreement on the recognition of the status of climate refugees could be based and principles for assistance to persons potentially recognized as such, as the term “climate refugees” is not based in international law, and does not reflect the many ways in which climate interacts with human mobility. Also, acknowledging the growing impact that collapsing eco-systems and weather-related disasters have on the livelihoods and can contribute to conflict, insecurity and displacement a further integrated climate action and disaster risk reduction should be incorporated into development cooperation.”