

Global Refugee Forum 2023

ICMPD Statement, Plenary Session

Undelivered statement for posting

Geneva, 13-15 December 2023

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is a pleasure and special honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). As a European migration organisation that over the years has expanded its activities to several other regions of the world, ICMPD is very much aware of the significance of the issue of solidarity and responsibility sharing and the importance of better functioning solutions for refugees – all of which are the aims, and indeed the very purpose, of the Global Refugee Forum.

Four years since the first Global Refugee Forum, we have seen increased engagement on refugee issues through the Global Compact on Refugees, including the participation of new partners, especially from the private sector, who are actively supporting refugees. We have seen the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive quickly grant people fleeing Ukraine the temporary right to stay, work, and access services to settle in. At the same time, we have seen new displacement situations, including in Ukraine. We still see people making dangerous journeys during which lives are lost. We see the urgent need to develop credible alternatives to these perilous journeys, so that people have a real chance to rebuild their lives in safety.

Worldwide, there are more than 36 million refugees and 62 million people who have been internally displaced, many of whom find themselves in protracted situations of displacement. We all agree that these people deserve our utmost attention and support and that it is our obligation to do our best to help them and to help their host countries. Currently, however, for each refugee that returned or was resettled in 2022, there were 16 new refugees – the highest ratio, according to UNHCR data. This basic fact should set the frame for all our action. It should inform us *where* we have to improve and *how much* we have to improve in the coming years. It also illustrates the important role that complementary pathways for work and study, as well as family reunification, can play in expanding access to sustainable solutions.

The Global Refugee Forum plays a particularly vital role in this regard, as it provides an important opportunity to link commitments to concretely defined actions for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. This approach is very close to our way of thinking and to our way of working at ICMPD. Our aim has always been to promote the link between political dialogue and actions on the ground, to gather evidence to inform policy development, to

combine targeted research and systematic capacity building, and to establish partnerships between States and other important actors on the basis of trust and mutual respect.

In this spirit, ICMPD will continue to work towards the aims of the Global Compact on Refugees. For one, ICMPD supports host states and Ukrainian partners since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine to assist those who were displaced in the wake of the war. ICMPD pledges in this respect not only to continue this support but to further broaden its counselling offer to displaced Ukrainians and to work with EU MS and Ukraine to identify durable solutions in host countries and in Ukraine if return is possible. On equal footing, ICMPD has for several years provided counselling for people on the move through its Migrant Resource Centres. Particularly since the Taliban took over in Afghanistan, Afghans continue to struggle to access reliable, accurate, and official information about the various resettlement and humanitarian admissions programmes, as well as complementary pathways, that may be available to them. With our pledge, ICMPD will expand its counselling services and seek to link Afghans with legal migratory routes, including resettlement, complementary pathways, and other employment opportunities in EU MS. But more importantly, ICMPD as an employer also pledges to be more active in recruiting refugee talent, and by joining the refugee participation pledge, to support the meaningful participation of refugees and host communities in decisions that affect their lives.

These are the four areas where ICMPD has committed to make concrete and additional contributions to the implementation of the Global Compact. Of course, in all our work, also outside these areas, we are committed to promote and uphold principles of protection. And our work in support of refugees and international protection goes far beyond these pledges.

The Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Refugee Forum are living proof that, despite political controversy and often heated public debate, a sense of solidarity among humans and a deeply rooted urge to help others who are in need of support continue to drive our actions. Our discussions must therefore continue to search for solutions that are realistic and idealistic at the same time. Ultimately, they will only work if they improve the situation of refugees, increase the level of solidarity and responsibility sharing among States and find the support of our governments and citizens. We all should work in that direction.

Thank you to UNHCR, to the Government of Switzerland and to the co-conveners of the second Global Refugee Forum for putting together this crucial event and for your continued dedication to this topic. I would like to express the strong appreciation of ICMPD, where we look forward to continued collaboration and engagement.

Thank you.