



Statement of the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts

High Commissioner Dialogue: 'Protection and assistance in urban settings and engaging with cities'

This is a statement on behalf of the Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts, a multi-stakeholder partnership bringing together 30 civil society, trade union, UN and philanthropic organisations around a shared agenda - to ensure that children's rights are at the heart of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, and to create a continuum of care, protection and support for refugee and migrant children.

The Initiative commends the High Commissioner for focusing his protection dialogue this year on 'Protection and assistance in urban settings and engaging with cities'. Cities offer important opportunities for refugee children and their families allowing children to go to school, access other services, thrive and contribute to the growth of local communities.

Yet, proximity doesn't necessarily mean access. Refugee children are often still unable to use these services due to issues around their status and a lack of documentation or information provision. For many children this translates into significant risk of violence, including SGBV, exploitation such as trafficking and child labour, early marriage, poor health, malnutrition, poverty and deprivation.

Cities are on the frontline, playing a key role. Many have stepped up to the challenge, adjusting and extending their services to make sure that no-one is left behind, working hand in hand with civil society, public service workers, the private sectors and children and young people themselves. We heard some good examples during this panel discussion and there are many more.

Yet, cities face many challenges. Especially the many cities in fragile countries where public services remain weak. And even in non-fragile contexts, there can be significant strains on resources.

There are however possible solutions. The Initiative for Child Rights in the Global Compacts commends States for adopting yesterday the Global Compact on Refugees. If effectively implemented, the Compact will strengthen the protection of refugee children and increase their access to care, protection, quality education and healthcare and other vital public services that refugee children desperately need. The Initiative stands ready to support cities and other authorities in reaching out to vulnerable children including in urban settings, in assessing their situation and in implementing solutions that uphold the child's best interests. The Initiative would like to invite local and national authorities and other key actors to:

- Develop action plans and pledges that prioritize investments and access to services for children on an equal footing with national children;
- Involve children and young people in policy making, urban planning and development;
- Work together through multi-stakeholder platforms for collaboration, exchange, learning, technical support and practice with a view of achieving step changes on 3 key issues:
 - a) Access to protection and care for refugee children, including alternatives to child detention
 - b) Access to services, such as education and healthcare
 - c) Strengthening mechanisms of collaboration on child protection across borders in pursuit of durable solutions in children's best interests.

Thank you!