

ADSP-ICVA Statement
The SSAR Support Platform: ‘Showing Resilience, Seeking Solutions’
High-Level Event at the Global Refugee Forum
13 December 2023 (16:00 – 17:30)

Distinguished delegates,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs, members of both the Asia Displacement Solutions Platform (ADSP) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

Four years ago, at the inaugural Global Refugee Forum, the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) was reaffirmed and reenergised, not least through the launch of a dedicated Support Platform. A lot has happened since. While work continued towards innovative solutions, challenging circumstances placed renewed pressure on host communities and adversely impacted the prospects for solutions for displacement-affected populations. Today, as the dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan shows little sign of abating, the UNHCR August 2021 non-return advisory remains in effect and all efforts should be deployed to avoid further harm to Afghans, including providing access to documentation and legal stay in host countries. More than ever, it is imperative to ensure Afghan refugees and host communities have a say in defining and implementing what it means to ‘Show Resilience and Seek Solutions’. They possess the capabilities and expertise to shape their own futures.

We acknowledge States’ sovereignty and how it has been exercised for decades through a tradition of welcoming and protecting refugees in the sub-region, despite challenging national contexts. Against this background, all stakeholders should continue to abide by their commitments and responsibilities under international and refugee law, including in avoiding arbitrary arrests, detention, and destruction of properties. We remind that, as part of customary international law and as the cornerstone of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, *non-refoulement* is a primary and essential component of international solidarity. It is all at once a concrete act of humanity and support as well as, arguably, the basis for increased responsibility-sharing from the global community.

Enabling host communities to maintain their traditions as inclusive societies is in everyone’s interest. Donors, international institutions and other relevant stakeholders also have a responsibility to continue finding modalities to support Afghan refugees and the communities hosting them, building constructive engagements and sustainability through respect for people’s own views and aspirations. We are encouraged by the pledges we have heard about so far and urge all stakeholders to continue pursuing responsibility-sharing by delivering additional longer-term support to Afghan refugees in the region. Pledges must avoid politicization, seek to provide sustainable funding, be aligned to national development plans and further support host communities.

In this perspective, we firmly believe that a Support Platform anchored in the Global Compact on Refugees’ multi-stakeholder and partnership approach can be instrumental in navigating challenges and generating solidarity at regional and global level. Emphasising local knowledge and empowering communities, the Support Platform can also ensure solutions are both globally and locally informed and applicable.

Since 2019, ADSP and ICVA have been active and propositional in looking for points of convergence and modalities for fruitful NGO contributions to the Support Platform, towards common objectives. NGOs' have a long history and expertise in working with Afghans and host communities. We encourage the continued resourcing of this work and enabling NGOs to engage meaningfully with the Support Platform, in a way that also maintains efficiency and trust among existing members. In this perspective, ADSP and ICVA commit to meeting the Platform members and its Secretariat to strengthen our collaboration.

Even at a time when there are competing priorities and crises, refugees deserve our unambiguous, principled support, regardless of other considerations. Even in the most dire of circumstances, it is fundamental to keep a humanitarian, rights-based and protection lens to displacement in the region.

We appeal to the Support Platform to step up its efforts in addressing Afghan displacement through increased diplomatic and political engagement, comprehensive and coordinated approaches to transitional solutions and resource mobilisation for improved responsibility sharing.