GRF Pledges
Asylum Capacity

Asylum Capacity in the GRF

Fair and efficient asylum systems allow States to promptly determine the status of those on their territory, enabling those in need of international protection to find and enjoy it, and ensuring that those not in need are identified quickly, ensuring the integrity of the asylum procedures. The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) highlights asylum systems as an area in need of support and established the Asylum Capacity Support Group (ACSG) as a special initiative to support their strengthening.

This note sets out strategic focus areas for pledges aimed at improving different aspects of asylum system capacity for the second Global Refugee Forum (GRF) scheduled for December 2023. The focus areas are based on outcomes from the 2019 GRF and 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting, the work of the ACSG and issues commonly observed in asylum systems that reduce their effective functioning. Pledges can include commitments by States to improve their asylum system or offers from States or other stakeholders to support asylum capacity development to produce maximum impact in reaching the objectives of the GCR. Pledges involving partnerships with a variety of stakeholders at national, regional and global level adopting a whole of society approach are encouraged.

All pledges that seek to strengthen the fairness, efficiency, adaptability and integrity of national asylum systems are welcome. However, pledges are particularly sought in the following strategic focus areas:

Focus areas

1 | Focus Area
Strong institutional capacities

States are encouraged to consider pledges focussed on strengthening the institutional capacities of asylum systems as well as back-office and support processes which facilitate the effectiveness of the asylum institution. Pledges linked to institutional capacities of asylum systems could include those related to the **initial establishment of an asylum system or the operationalization of one or more parts of an asylum system**. This last element could include the operationalization of an appeal mechanism or the creation of expert units within an asylum institution (e.g. country of origin information research unit or a unit addressing caseloads with particular vulnerabilities). Strengthened institutional capacities could further

include a **restructuring of asylum system's service provision** to enhance efficiency by co-locating relevant institutional actors (e.g. registration, identity checks, interviews, counselling and safe referrals to appropriate services).

Back-office and support processes are also critical to the effective functioning of the asylum institution (e.g. human resources, strategic budgeting and planning). States are encouraged to consider pledges to **realign human resource support to efficiently and sustainably address the needs of the asylum system** through conducting a functional review of the staffing needs, refining human resource policies and practices, investing in learning and skills development for staff, and implementing programmes and interventions to increase staff efficiency and reduce turnover. In relation to support processes, pledges could include **enhancing strategic planning capacities of asylum institutions and commitments to enhancing financing of asylum systems**. States are encouraged to anchor such pledges in national development plans.[1]

Examples of potential pledges in line with this focus area:

- The Government of [Country] commits to by [year] operationalize the appeal process as provided in the Refugee Act and Regulations.
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to develop a human resource policy and scheme of service for the asylum institution to guide the effectiveness of recruitment processes, improve performance management and reduce staff turnover by [number] percent.
- The Government of [Country] commits to by [year] provide support to [Country] on the establishment of an expert country of origin information unit within its asylum institution.

Overall guidance on the formulation of new pledges

In line with the general guidance for GCR pledges, a high-quality pledge is:

New or additional, meaning that pledges do not reiterate commitments already made but involve new or additional support, allocation of resources, or engagement in pursuit of GCR objectives.

Quantifiable, providing, where possible, an implementation timeline, beneficiary data, and details of the activities to be undertaken or support provided or needed for implementation of the pledge.

Needs-driven, aligning the pledge with the key recommendations and the GCR principles and objectives.

Measurable, within a specific period, where possible.

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2 Focus Area
Legislative and regulatory frameworks that facilitate asylum processing

States are encouraged to consider pledges to draft or amend laws on asylum in order to improve fairness, efficiency, adaptability or integrity of asylum procedures in line with international and regional standards and norms. Pledges in this area include the adoption of legislation and/or regulations to incorporate the refugee definitions and refugee law obligations in line with international and regional legal frameworks for refugee protection where this has not taken place yet. Pledges could further include a review of asylum legislation or regulations to address bottlenecks in asylum systems, including with a view to adopt an individualized decision-maker model or decentralize decision-making authority to professional RSD staff in order to shorten and simplify asylum processes. Legislative or regulatory review might equally be required to create the possibility of and facilitate group or simplified decision-making as well as providing for protection-oriented arrangements which enable legal stay with appropriate safeguards as a complement to asylum procedures, where this would ensure

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[1] Recommendation 4 of the High-level Officials Meeting, Outcomes of High-Level Official Meeting, 2021.

faster access to protection and services for the individuals concerned or to effectively address large scale movements of refugees and situations of mixed movements.

Examples of potential pledges in line with this focus area:
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to adopt legislation that incorporates the refugee definitions and refugee law obligations in line with international and regional standards and norms for refugee protection.
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to undertake legal reform to introduce efficiencies to the asylum system by introducing an individualized decision-maker model.
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to support two countries to undertake legal reform to *inter alia* introduce group and simplified decision-making.

3 | Focus Area
Procedures, systems and practices that enhance efficiency and quality

States are encouraged to consider pledges which develop and review procedures, systems and practices to address delays in asylum systems and make quality improvements, often linked to systemic issues related to procedures and the supporting case and data management systems. Pledges in this area could include procedural enhancements for protection sensitive entry, frontloading data collection at registration, referral mechanisms, triaging of cases, implementation of differentiated refugee status determination case processing modalities (e.g., group or simplified processing). Pledges could further include introducing or reinforcing age, gender and diversity sensitive-asylum procedures (e.g. ensuring child-friendly procedures or procedures to assist vulnerable applicants in making their claims).

Pledges could also focus on reinforcing case or data management systems, often through digitization, to ensure alignment with the needs to implement procedural enhancements, effectively track, or report on asylum claims. Pledges could include implementation of digital solutions for reception, identification, registration, scheduling and enhancements to case management systems to better capture and analyse datasets. Pledges could furthermore be made in relation to developing or improving interoperability between asylum case management and relevant government systems, including with civil registry and national documentation systems, to allow more efficiency in referrals, protection follow-up or issuance of documentation. Other areas that could be considered for pledges include enhancing the efficiency of physical and digital file management systems for asylum systems.

Examples of potential pledges in line with this focus area:
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to support [Country] in reducing its backlog by providing technical support for holistic systems review to identify inefficiencies and developing a remedial plan.
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to implement digital solutions in the asylum procedure for reception, identification, registration, and scheduling to allow for more efficient case management and to address the backlog through data gathering to support triaging and tracking of asylum claims.
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to develop interoperability between asylum case management systems and systems processing refugee identity cards to enhance efficiency of document issuance.
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to operationalize child friendly procedures, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4 | Focus Area
Quality and efficiency through diverse expertise, innovation and research

This pledging area is focused on harnessing diverse expertise to enhance the functioning of asylum systems. In addition to pledges made by States, organizations and institutions such as civil society organizations, law firms, bar associations, ombudspersons, national human rights institutions, private sector organizations, refugee led organizations and academia are encouraged to pledge according to their different areas of expertise. This could include, but is not limited to, process design, processing particular types of claims, feedback mechanisms, leadership or monitoring. Pledges could also include support for innovative processes, technical, digital solutions, or implementing research projects to address challenges where sufficient research is not directly available.

Organizations and institutions are encouraged to submit pledges highlighting the expertise they will offer to address quality and efficiency of a particular or multiple asylum systems especially as they relate to focus areas one to three. Such pledges could be submitted independently, or in collaboration with States or other actors, including by considering to joining the legal community pledge focussing on asylum systems. States are encouraged to submit pledges highlighting gaps in their asylum systems that they seek to address, while linking with diverse stakeholders that may be able to help fulfil these gaps.

Examples of potential pledges in line with this focus area:
- The Government of [Country] commits by [year] to implement a quality assurance project with input from [organization x] and [organization y] as part of the project's reference group.
- [Name organization] commits by [year] to support the [asylum institution] in [Country] by providing [time] for technical support on legal aid in the asylum procedure.
- [Name organization] commits by [year] to support asylum capacity in [Country] by providing an expert research paper on processing asylum claims made by [vulnerable group(s)].

Submitting and updating on pledges

Pledges can be submitted by using the online form on the website of the GCR. New pledges in the area of asylum capacity will be added to the database of existing pledges announced since 2019 as well as highlighted on ACSG website. Pledging entities are encouraged to prioritize the implementation of both existing and new pledges.

Pledging entities are requested to regularly report on the implementation status of their pledges. The online system remains open continuously and pledging entities are encouraged to submit updates throughout the year, particularly when the status of their pledge implementation changes. Twice per year UNHCR will publicize broad trends on the implementation of pledges based on the updates received.

ACSG Secretariat, May 2023

Contact: Questions relating to GRF pledges on asylum capacity can be addressed via email to acsg@unhcr.org.