



Statement in honor of World Refugee Day: The Right to Seek Safety

Presented by Eva Sandis

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I am pleased that I was asked to pay tribute here today, on behalf of our Committee, to refugees across the globe in recognition of World Refugee Day.

Concern with refugees is in the DNA of the NGO Committee on Migration. Two of its 3 founding Mothers –Eva Richter and I – are refugees, and the third, Rosita Resnick, is a migrant from Argentina. Our Committee has always counted refugees as well as migrants among its members, indeed, frequently its most active ones.

Since its inception, in 2007, our Committee has worked tirelessly to protect ALL migrants and their human rights in accordance with the United Nations Charter. We advocated for the adoption and implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, for the Global Compact on Refugees; and for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Our focus has always been on solutions for those in need, especially the most vulnerable: children; climate refugees; migrants in mixed migration and other vulnerable situations, including trafficking, smuggling, violence, torture, and traumatization; and those subjected to racism and xenophobia.

We have advocated for both refugees and migrants in our Mission Visits with Member States, and in our monthly meetings. We have also advocated as contributing members to the Civil Society Action Committee, of which we were one of the founders and co-conveners. From the outset, in 2016, as a self-organized civil society movement, it was composed of an equal number of NGOs focused on refugees and of NGOs focused on migrants, working together. All the points of our Committee’s advocacy regarding the IMRF Progress Declaration are included in the Action Committee’s statement for “[12 Key Ways for States to Get Back on Track.](#)”

For our Committee there is a clear call to move forward from the IMRF and engage in a strong civil society advocacy on behalf of a future that leaves no one behind. That means continuing

direct talks with governments interested in partnering with civil society to find solutions to the needs of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons.

There is a need for a strong emphasis on protecting migrants in vulnerable situations, especially those in mixed migration movements, including recognized and de facto refugees; and in that context, for strong support for the call of over 150 Mayors and city leaders, in their Marrakech Declaration of 2018, vigorously renewed at the IMRF, for the interaction of the Global Compact for Migration and its 2018 sister, the Global Compact on Refugees, implementing them “in unison”.

I will only touch on the importance of the two Compacts working together because that requires a full Program of its own, with consistent follow-up. However, even a brief comparison of the priorities and proposed next steps for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and those for the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration show important common denominators, including:

- The need for strengthened systems of international protection, enhancing access to territory and ensuring proper documentation of refugees and migrants;
- Strengthening coordination between national governments and local communities;
- Addressing climate change as a risk multiplier;
- Enhancing self-reliance through work options;
- Access to services, especially housing, education, and health;
- Expansion of safe pathways and arrivals (this speaks to this year’s theme of World Refugee Day, namely: seeking safety is a human right)
- More systematic participation by refugees and migrants in all matters concerning them.

These common denominators cry out for a working together of the two global compacts. This has been suggested repeatedly but so far, not acted upon. As Ignacio Packer, the Executive Director of ICVA has noted, what is needed is a concrete mechanism to allow these two Compacts to work together, and so far, there is none.

My proposal to you, in recognition of World Refugee Day, is to work to bring such a cooperative effort about by making it a high priority item for our next round of 2022-23 Committee activities.