



**NGO Joint Statement for the
8-9 December 2016
High Commissioner's Dialogue on Children on the Move**

Dear High Commissioner, colleagues, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the NGO Friends of this Dialogue, we thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak.

We've heard throughout the Dialogue about the key protection needs and risks faced by children on the move and the urgency with which we need to respond.

2017 must be the year of laying strong foundations for action, putting commitments and recommendations into practice. In this perspective, protecting children on the move should be at the very heart of the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the Global Compact on Refugees.

It is time to identify concrete steps for this to happen. Today we make a call for action to Member States, UNHCR and all stakeholders to champion the rights and needs of children on the move by committing to the following 6 key priorities:

- **Children on the move should be considered children first and foremost, independently of migration status considerations.** They should benefit from the most protective legal and policy framework available, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and an ethics of care. This has particular implications for their right to family unity, legal identity and nationality.
- **Best Interest Determinations are critical** to ensure the protection of children on the move, in particular, to identify durable solutions. More resources should be dedicated to developing and maintaining functioning BID systems, including through qualified child protection specialists.
- **Rights-based alternatives to detention of children should be both enshrined in legislation and implemented in practice.** Children on the move should no longer be detained just because they are refugees or migrants. Instead, they should be cared for in a safe and nurturing environment, appropriate for a child. We also urge Member States to develop national action plans to eliminate child detention, including milestones to end this practice in the Global Compact.
- **States should urgently provide and strengthen Child Protection Systems,** with adequate resources to make them accessible and effectively responsive to the specific needs of children on the move at all stages of their journey. As girls and boys of different ages are exposed to a variety of protection risks and needs,

responses should be tailored accordingly. **States should also strengthen cross-border coordination and cooperation** in order to provide immediate and long-term protection, care and support.

- **States should ensure that all children on the move live in safety and dignity with access to essential services**, particularly to **quality education**, within 30 days of their initial displacement. As we heard several times during this Dialogue, and from children and youth themselves, quality education plays a critical protective and transformative role for children, young people and their families.
- Finally, the **principles of non-discrimination and participation** must be taken into consideration at all times. We must work so that societies **welcome and celebrate diversity, and actively prevent discrimination**. We must also **listen to the children's voices** in the development of all policies and decisions that affect them, including in the development of the Compacts.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to address the needs and rights of children on the move. We urge you to ensure that the recommendations from this Dialogue are incorporated into the CRRF implementation as practical and actionable steps. All civil society organizations represented here look forward to working jointly to achieve this vision for children.