**Global Refugee Forum Preparation
Government of Ethiopia's 2023 GRF Pledges**

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Refugees and Returnees Service

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Background

The Government of Ethiopia (GoE), through its Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), and in collaboration with federal line ministries and regional governments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) prepared this document to outline Ethiopia's new commitments for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF). The document aims to inform and engage all relevant stakeholders that support the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the existing pledges made by the GoE. It is also the objective of this document to strengthen existing partnerships and foster new ones through matching support for new pledges for the benefit of refugees and host communities.

To develop new pledges that are relevant, effective, and with sustainable impact, the following key considerations have been taken into account:

1. Ensuring that the new pledge areas are not overlapping or duplicating existing GoE commitments;

2. The pledges support and enhance the ongoing efforts of the GoE to improve the lives of refugees and host communities;

3. Feasibility of achieving the pledges within a four-year period considering the potential matching support, enabling environment, context, and availability of resources;

4. Aligning the new commitments with national development plans and priorities of Ethiopia; and

5. Pledges are based on the needs of both refugees and host communities, as identified through consultations and assessments.

Government of Ethiopia's Pledges for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum

1. Climate Action

The displacement settings and their hosting communities of Ethiopia are located in climate-vulnerable regions where severe incidents of drought and flood have been witnessed in recent years. The dependency of refugees and host communities on the natural forest for cooking fuel, shelter construction and livelihood activities have accelerated the deforestation rate, depletion of natural resources and local habitat deterioration. This has been further aggravated by the increasing number of refugees

crossed to Ethiopia and the impact of climate change in the East and Horn of Africa in general. Moreover, Protection and Solutions for displaced communities are becoming more difficult to achieve, as climate change has negatively impacted the areas of origin and refuge in Ethiopia.

The Government of Ethiopia, with its Green Legacy Initiative, has been keen to address the impact of climate change and environmental degradation, through protection and restoration of the environment, managing natural resources, afforestation of degraded lands, and plantation of billions of tree seedlings across the country. The Climate Resilience and Green led Economic strategy of the country has also promoting clean and renewable energy solutions. These initiatives seek also target refugee hosting areas and communities that are vulnerable to climate change with inclusion and joint implementation approaches involving all actors. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) of Ethiopia aims to strengthen holistic integration of Climate Chang adaptation in Ethiopia's long term development pathway. The GoE also commits to include refugees in the NAP with support of international actors, effective institutions, government structures and strengthened systems for disaster risk reduction and management in refugee hosting areas.

Climate change and its impacts disproportionately affect women, who often have less access to resources, power, and opportunities than men. Women also bear the brunt of domestic chores such as cooking, fetching water, and collecting firewood, which expose them to gender-based violence when environmental degradation occurs, or displacement is necessary. The Ethiopian government recognizes the vulnerability of women to the adverse effects of climate change and environmental harm. Hence, the government aims to prevent violence against women in all its environmental policies and programs. Women's voices and needs will be valued at every stage of designing, implementing, and evaluating environmental policies and programs. Moreover, the government will work towards empowering women and promoting their leadership in managing the environment and dealing with the impacts of climate change.

Pledge Statement

- ✓ **Address the environmental impact resulting from hosting large number of refugees by planting 100,000,000 multi-purpose seedlings, executing environmental rehabilitation activities and providing alternative source of energy, including national grid and solar mini-grid connections. With this pledge Ethiopia also commits to include refugees to the National Adaptation Plan.**

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2. Human Settlement

The Government reaffirms its commitment to integrate refugees who have been living in the country for a protracted period of time by transforming some of the refugee camps into urban settlements and ensuring their social and economic participation. The settlement strategy aims to include service provision to refugees in the national systems, such as basic and social services, as well as other services that are offered by local governments to Ethiopians. However, refugees will still retain their refugee status, and the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) will enhance its protection capacity and presence.

The Government has demonstrated its dedication to the inclusion agenda in recent emergencies that required new site development, such as Alem-Wach and Mirqaan. There are also ongoing initiatives in Kebribeyah with the creation of an inclusion roadmap for Kebribeyah and the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Somali Regional State, RRS and UNHCR to locally integrate Kebribeyah and surrounding refugee camps in Somali Regional State. A local inclusion compact called the Melkadida Refugee Compact is also being developed covering four main pillars of inclusion; access to clean & renewable off-grid solar energy, sustainable water supply, expanding irrigable land, and enhance inclusive health and education system.

Current discussions with the Somali regional state have created a conducive environment to advance full inclusion in the region. Additionally, there are refugee camps and sites where refugees and hosts live together, which can serve as an opportunity to expand the urbanization initiative. The Aysaita refugee camp in the Afar region is potential areas to consider. Ethiopia's commitment to providing local solutions to protracted refugee situations is evident through its progressive refugee policy and achievements thereof. The Government's pledge to upgrade refugee camps into urban settlements and integrate them socio-economically is a significant step towards achieving long term solutions to protracted refugee situations.

Pledge Statement

- ✓ **Transform selected refugee camps into sustainable urban settlements by enhancing the quality and availability of shelter, infrastructure, and public services, such as roads, electricity, water, sanitation, health, and education by aligning them with adjacent towns' masterplan, by 2027.**

3. Inclusion of refugees into existing national systems

The integration of services for refugees is a key component for the successful implementation of GCR objectives as well as Ethiopia's 2016 and 2019 pledges. To achieve this goal, a timely and strategic pledge on the integration of services is needed.

Some sectors, such as WaSH and tertiary education, have already made progress in integrating services, while others have more potential to do so. Promising areas in this regard can be the inclusion of refugees in the Central Statistics Service (CSS), National ID, Gender-Based Violence Service (GBV) and Secondary education and Technical and Vocational Education and training (TVET).

Inclusion of Refugees in National Statistics

Refugees are not well represented in the national statistics of Ethiopia, which hinders their socio-economic inclusion and integration into national and local development plans and programs. To address this gap, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) needs to improve its data collection, management, dissemination, and use practices related to refugees at the national level. This requires mapping the existing official and non-official sources of refugee data and the key actors involved in refugee data collection, as well as establishing a system for data harmonization and coordination among various information sources. Moreover, the Ethiopian Central Statistics Services and the Refugees and Returnees Services need material, technical, logistical and financial support to include refugees in national Ethiopian statistics.

Inclusion of Refugees in National ID Systems

A modern ID system is essential for effective national planning, economic transition, good governance, resource efficiency, crime prevention, and inclusive policy making and development. Ethiopia is developing a digital identification system based on modern technology, which has been tested and piloted for the last two years. The National ID Program has partnered with various service sectors, including financial services. The National Identification Program Office, the Refugees and Returnees Service and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to provide "Fayida" Identification Number to refugees. Therefore, refugees who are included in the national ID system will be able to access financial services and improve their social protection.

Inclusion of Refugees in Gender-Based Violence Services

The GoE, in partnership with UNHCR and various stakeholders, is dedicated to addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting gender equality. The GoE recognizes GBV as a serious human rights violation that hampers the potential for sustainable development. Ethiopia has adopted a comprehensive strategy to tackle gender-based violence (GBV) that covers prevention, response, and advocacy. This strategy has been developed to empower communities with the knowledge and tools to prevent and respond to GBV, as well as to offer protection and support services to those affected by it. Ethiopia has also made strides in integrating refugees into its national response system and developing legal and policy frameworks to prevent and address GBV. However, there is an urgent need to enhance the capacities of national systems to provide effective and timely response services for GBV survivors among asylum seekers, refugees, and host communities. Currently, the response services are insufficient and inadequate, especially in areas where refugees reside. The main challenges include a lack of skilled human resources, poor infrastructure and facilities, limited access to information and referral mechanisms, and low awareness and sensitivity to GBV issues among service providers and community members. The challenges of GBV require urgent and effective actions to improve the availability and quality of GBV response services at all levels. Building a robust national GBV response system is key to ensure timely and quality services for survivors. In addition, enhancing the skills of various actors involved in GBV prevention and response, such as law enforcement, healthcare providers, social workers, and civil society organizations, is vital.

Inclusion of Refugees in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs are important for refugees in Ethiopia, as they can improve their economic and social conditions and help them access the education system and create opportunities for employment. However, many refugees face challenges such as low literacy levels which limit their opportunities to enroll in formal TVET programs. Additionally, employers are reluctant to accept refugee graduates' certificates from refugee camps, which reduces their job opportunities. Therefore, non-formal TVET programs that are linked to livelihood activities in camps and urban areas will be prioritized in the short and medium terms, as they can enhance the livelihood opportunities of refugees by providing them with relevant skills and linking them with employers. The Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has committed to include refugees in all levels of education without discrimination, following the adoption of the

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Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The main objective of GoE is to expand the government TVET system and facilities to offer quality and accredited inclusive skill training that meets the labor market demand for both host and refugee communities by 2027.

Inclusion of refugees' secondary schools in national education system

In line with the commitments made by the Government of Ethiopia in 2016 at the Leaders' Summit in New York and the subsequent pledges made in 2019 at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) to increase refugee access to national educational programs, the Government of Ethiopia continues to be a leading voice in the protection and assistance of refugees and asylum-seekers. The Refugee Proclamation No. 1110/2019, gives refugees and asylum-seekers a legal right to access secondary education, as resources allow. In December 2017, Ethiopia, as part of the IGAD member states, made a commitment to include refugee education into their national education system by signing the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education.

Based on these commitments, the Government has included refugee education in its sixth Education Sector Development Program. Moreover, refugee secondary education transfer institutional framework documents were signed, and three Refugee Secondary schools transferred to MoE's management and Refugee education data has been integrated in the MoE Education Management Information System (EMIS) and refugee secondary schools are benefited from school grant funds. However, there are serious challenges which affect secondary school integration into the national system. These includes low enrolment rate, which is 14.6 percent, low quality of education due to overcrowded classrooms, shortage of textbooks, teachers, WASH facilities, teaching learning supplies and lack of student scholastic materials.

Therefore, for full integration of refugee secondary education into the national system requires predictable financial support from the international community based on the burden and responsibility sharing principles to ease the pressure on the existing national secondary educational system.

Pledge Statement

✓ **Enhance the capacity of GoE to include 1,000,000 refugees into the national Central Statistics Service (CSS), the national Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response programs, 814,000 refugees into the national ID program, refugee secondary schools into the national system and 30,000 refugees and host communities in the TVET systems with 70% job opportunities by 2027.**

4. *Private Sector Engagement*

One of the main challenges faced by refugee hosting areas is the lack of adequate investment opportunities that can foster economic growth, social cohesion, and resilience. In order to address this challenge, it is essential to enhance the enabling environment for more investment in these regions by improving the legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks and infrastructural amenities.

By improving the enabling environment for more investment in refugee hosting regions, it is possible to create a win-win situation for both refugees and host communities, as well as for investors and development partners. More investment can generate more economic activity, employment, income, tax revenue, social services, stability, and peaceful co-existence, as well as development.

Ethiopia has made five pledges related to enhancing refugees' access to productive employment in 2016 and 2019. As a result of these pledges, the Government adopted a refugee proclamation that recognizes refugees' right to work and supports the development of initiatives that aim to create economic opportunities. However, refugees still face barriers in pursuing employment opportunities due to low involvement of the private sector in refugee hosting regions.

Refugees are mostly located in the margins of emerging regions where the conditions for stimulating private sector investment are poor.

Since the private sector is the main source of job creation and local economic development, Ethiopia intends to improve the conditions for doing business in refugee hosting regions for the benefit of both refugees and host communities. This priority area involves context-specific reforms, such as incentives for domestic and foreign direct investment in refugee hosting areas, access to customized financial services and assistance in establishing backward and forward linkages.

Pledge Statement

✓ **Improve the enabling environment for private sector engagement and investment to foster socio-economic development and to boost productivity of refugee and hosting communities.**

5. *Access to Land*

One of the key factors that can enhance the livelihoods and resilience of both refugees and host communities is access to irrigable land. Irrigation enables farmers to grow crops throughout the year, diversify their production and increase their yields and incomes. Moreover, irrigation can help to cope with the impacts of climate change such as droughts and floods by providing a reliable source of water. Access to irrigable land, however, is often limited by legal, institutional, and physical barriers. Therefore, it is essential to promote policies and interventions that facilitate access to land and irrigation schemes for refugees and host communities in a way that respects their rights, needs and preferences and fosters social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

The IKEA Foundation has supported Ethiopia's commitment to provide land for irrigation to refugees and host communities who want to grow crops in Melkadida. The IKEA Project has enhanced the livelihood and self-reliance of refugees by creating an inclusive cooperative model. This model involves more than 2,000 people from both host and refugee communities in over 50 mixed cooperatives and business groups along different value chains. Nine mixed agriculture cooperatives have cultivated 1,000 hectares of land using irrigation schemes bringing tangible development benefits to hosts and refugees.

However, the initiative faces challenges such as climate change impacts, reduced humanitarian aid, insecurity, continued aid dependency, insufficient development investments and rising commodity prices. Besides, despite comprising 50% of the refugee population, women have not been able to benefit equally in land and irrigation schemes, which demand their full participation and benefit.

Pledge Statement

✓ **Provide access to 10,000 hectares of irrigable land through lease arrangements and promote climate-smart agriculture and livestock value chain contributing to improved food security and socio-economic empowerment of refugees and host communities of which at least 50% being women and 30% refugees.**

6. Digital Connectivity and access to documentation

The Government of Ethiopia is committed to enhancing the national digital infrastructure to facilitate refugees' access to the digital economy, digitally enabled livelihood opportunities, information, and social-economic e-services. Accordingly, the following are priority areas:

Civil Registration and documentation:

Leveraging the support from partners contributing to this pledge area on technical assistance, capacity building, and equipment, this priority area aims to enhance the quality and accessibility of vital records, including birth, death, marriage, and divorce certificates for refugees. This pledge area is expected to improve refugee protection, access to rights, and their overall well-being in Ethiopia.

Digital Connectivity and Financial Inclusion:

This pledge area will focus on improving digital connectivity in refugee hosting areas to promote financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, remote work, and digital skills. The goal is to provide digital financial services that enable refugees and host communities to securely save, borrow, insure, remit, and transact money, thereby fostering economic empowerment and resilience.

Integration of e-Government services for refugees:

The government propose linking the refugee Digital Request and Complaint System (DRCS) with e-services provided by various government departments, including the Refugees and Returnees Service, Immigration and Citizenship Service, Ministry of Labor and Skills, Ethiopian Investment Commission, and Federal and Regional Police Commissions. This integration aims to streamline service delivery, reduce the time and costs associated with accessing services, enhance the protection and solutions available to refugees, and prevent fraud associated with paper-based documentation.

Standardization of Refugee Convention Travel Documents:

As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or the 1954 Statelessness Convention, Ethiopia acknowledges its responsibility to issue Convention Travel Documents (CTDs) to refugees and stateless persons. The Government is committed to standardizing Refugee Convention Travel Documents by addressing capacity limitations in issuing machine-readable travel documents that comply with the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This standardization will enhance refugees' freedom of movement, facilitate their access to solutions, including

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complementary pathways, mitigate risks of forgery, and ensure compliance with international travel document requirements.

Through the initiatives, we aim to create an enabling environment where refugees have equitable access to digital infrastructure, economic opportunities, and essential services. To support this pledge, the GoE is reiterating its commitment to working with a wide range of partners including governments, international organizations, the private sector, NGOs, and other stakeholders contributing to support this pledge.

Pledge Statement

- ✓ **Enhance digital infrastructure in refugee hosting areas to facilitate refugee inclusion to the digital economy including digitally enabled livelihood opportunities and financial inclusion as well as to foster their access to socio-economic e-services, including standardized travel documents.**

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