

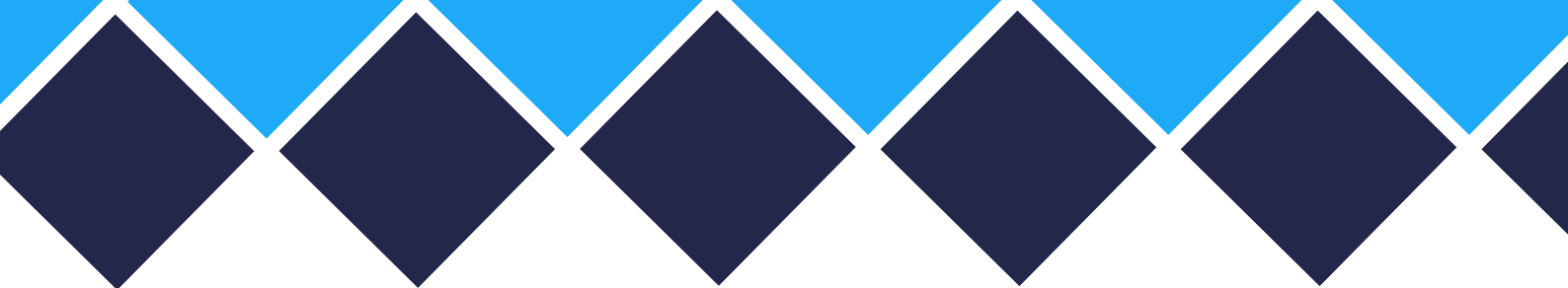


THE IDRC RESEARCH CHAIRS ON FORCED DISPLACEMENT DECLARATION

on the Foundations and Renewal of the International
Protection for Forcibly Displaced Populations



Adopted during the Policy Dialogue on Forced Displacement, held in
Rabat, Morocco on June 3rd, 2026



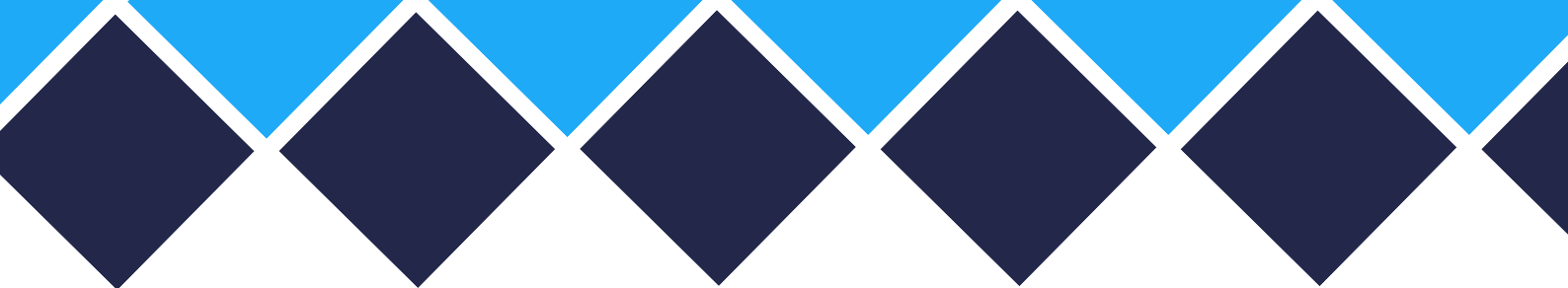
◆◆ PREAMBLE

We, the IDRC Research Chairs on Forced Displacement, scholars, educators, and advocates based in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa, gathered in Rabat on the eve of the 75th anniversary of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951,

RECALLING the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1950), the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1967), instruments that together established the foundations of the international refugee protection regime.

RECALLING FURTHER that the 1967 Protocol removed the temporal and geographic limits within which the 1951 Convention had originally been confined, in response to refugee crises in Africa and beyond that the original Convention could not accommodate.

BEARING IN MIND the regional traditions through which states and peoples globally have defended and expanded those foundations, including the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which expanded the refugee definition and codified the duty of inter-regional solidarity; the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees and the subsequent Cartagena+ process, which embedded refugee protection within human rights through the principle of pro homine; the 2009 Kampala Convention, the first binding regional treaty on internally displaced persons; and the 2018 Kolkata Declaration, which foregrounded the protection of the stateless and the unrecognised.



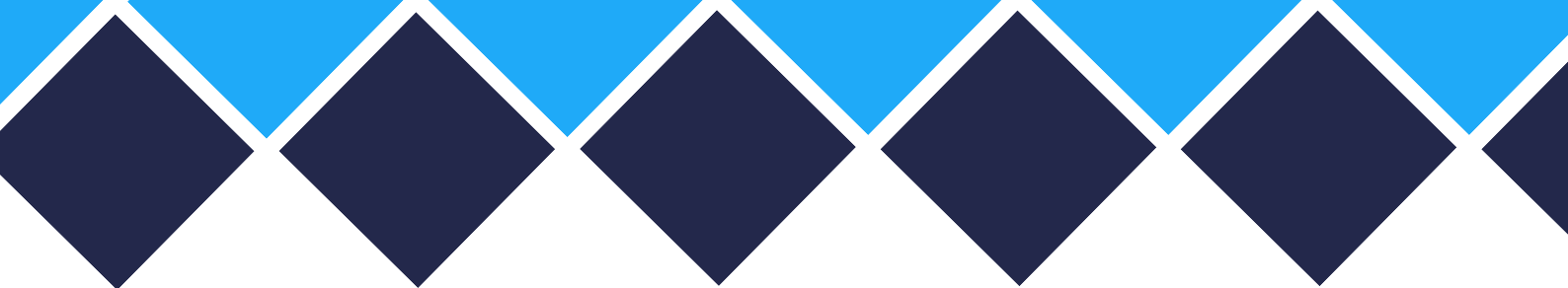
CONSIDERING the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, which sought to renew multilateral commitment to refugee protection, and which drew, in their Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, on regional processes from the Global South.

RECOGNISING that over 123 million persons were forcibly displaced worldwide at the end of 2024, of whom nearly 43 million are refugees and 73.5 million are internally displaced; that 73 per cent of refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, and 67 per cent in neighbouring states; that the largest hosts – the Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye, Colombia, Uganda, Pakistan, Peru, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo – together host more refugees than the European Union and North America combined; and that Lebanon bears the greatest per capita burden in the world.

NOTING that displacement is more protracted, more multi-causal, and more difficult to resolve than at any point since the creation of the international refugee protection regime – the norms and institutions through which states share responsibility for those who flee persecution.

NOTING FURTHER that populations and communities across multiple regions are bearing the consequences of these international protection challenges, among them those displaced from and within Sudan, Gaza, Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Haiti, South Sudan, Venezuela, and the Central Sahel.

ALARMED by the indiscriminate and xenophobic attacks affecting forcibly displaced populations across the world.



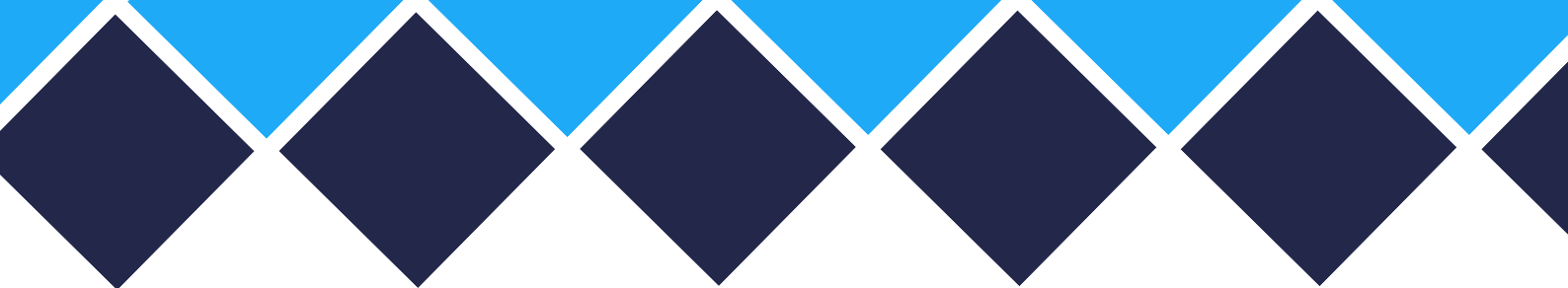
ALARMED ALSO that the foundations of international refugee protection are being publicly contested with calls being made to abandon the principle of asylum, to abrogate non-refoulement, and to replace refugee rights and durable solutions with strict border control, first-country-of-asylum rules, formalised temporary status, expedited returns, and unilateral cessation.

DISTRESSED by systematic attempts to move asylum seekers to third states unable or unwilling to provide effective protection, by pushbacks at land and sea borders, by the criminalisation of those who seek asylum and those who assist them, and by the documented refoulement of refugees to states where they face torture, arbitrary detention, and other irreparable harm.

CONCERNED that the financial architecture of UNHCR was, from the agency's creation in 1950, designed around voluntary and earmarked contributions concentrated among a small number of donors; that this design has now become the regime's principal vulnerability; and that the states leading the public call to narrow the Convention are not the states that bear the greatest responsibility for the displaced.

MINDFUL that the 1951 Convention was constructed in the aftermath of an interwar refugee architecture that, when the time came, could not protect those who most needed protection.

AFFIRMING the core principles of refugee protection that the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol established and that the regional traditions extended: non-refoulement as a peremptory norm; the right to seek and enjoy asylum; non-discrimination; family unity; the right to work and to access education, health, and social services; protection in safety and dignity; and the search for durable solutions chosen by the displaced.



ASSERTING the inherent rights of human beings regardless of their citizenship status.

HOLDING FINALLY the validity and relevance of existing instruments of protection and the risk of the dismantling of this protection through efforts to reform them.

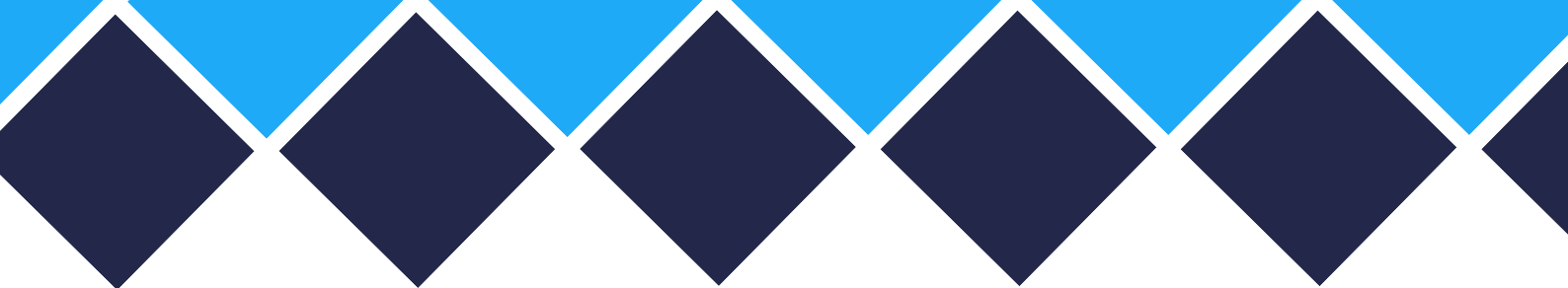
◆◆ **WE HEREBY ADOPT THE FOLLOWING ON THE FOUNDATIONS AND RENEWAL OF INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE PROTECTION:**

1 WE REAFFIRM the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol as the foundation of refugee protection.

Seventy-five years after the adoption of the 1951 Convention and 59 years after universalising it via the 1967 Protocol, the core principles remain valid, necessary, and binding. Non-refoulement, including the prohibition of rejection at the frontier, is a peremptory norm of international law. The right to seek and enjoy asylum is a right of the person. Border sovereignty and non-refoulement are not in legal tension.

2 WE STAND in the lineage of the regional traditions that broadened the regime of the above-mentioned instruments, and we support its extension.

Since 1967, refugee protection has been deepened and extended by the regions that host most of the world's displaced. We commit to the continuation of these regional traditions through domestic legal incorporation, regional renewal, and cross-regional exchange.



3 WE REJECT the architecture by which states displace their protection obligations onto others.

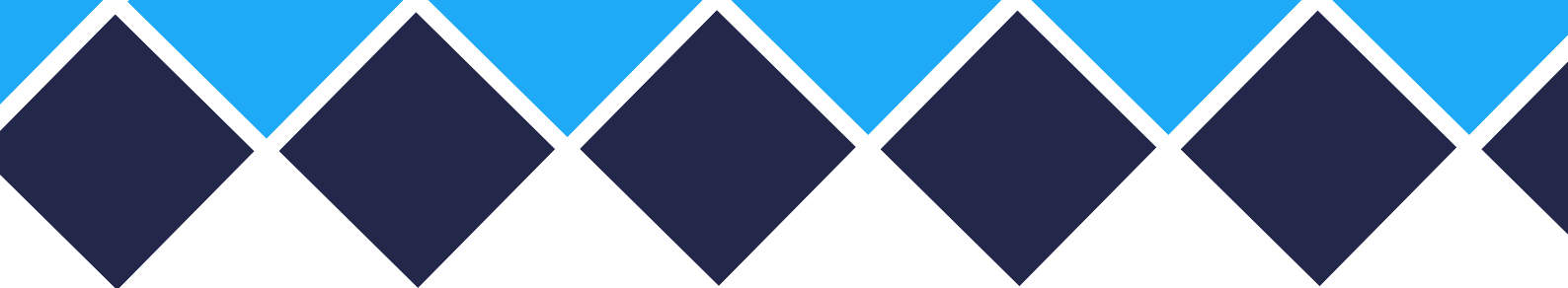
The following practices violate the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol: the externalisation of asylum determination beyond the territory of the responsible state; transfer arrangements moving asylum seekers to third states unable or unwilling to provide effective protection; bilateral and regional “safe third country” rules that effectively deny access to asylum; the systematic interception, return, or pushback of those seeking protection at land and sea borders; the pre-screening of asylum claims in regions of origin under cooperation arrangements that condition assistance on migration management; and the criminalisation of asylum seekers, refugees, and those who assist them.

4 WE AFFIRM that protection is a continuing obligation, not a one-time grant.

We reject the political instrumentalisation of refugees and call on all stakeholders to monitor erosion and support host states.

5 WE REJECT the pretence that rollback is reform and consider that renewal – not renegotiation and reopening of the Convention – is the remedy.

The challenges before refugee protection lie in implementation, financing, and the political will of states – not in the foundational instruments.



WE REJECT the practice of burden-shifting through

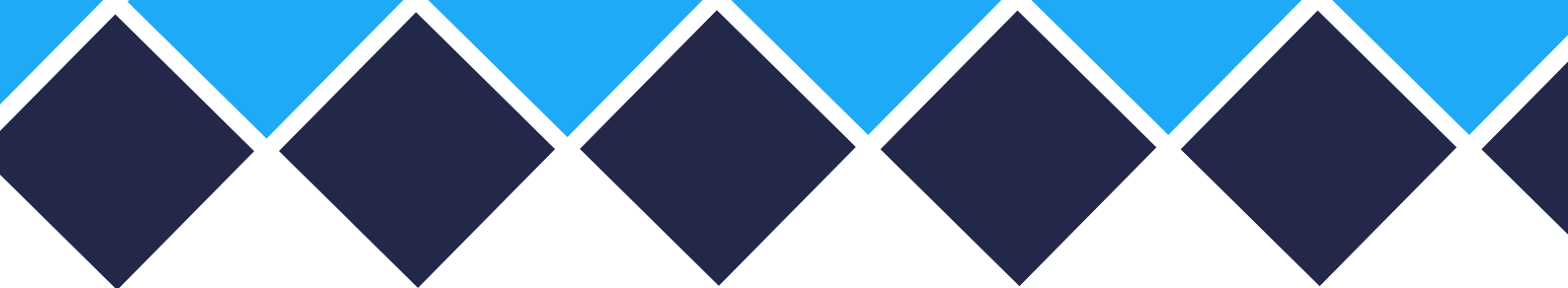
6 extraterritorialization and outsourcing protection and call for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing and predictable financing of protection.

Containing forcibly displaced populations in the Global South only serves to amplify strains faced by low- and middle-income countries located in major regions of forced displacement. We call for implementing the burden- and responsibility-sharing commitments the Global Compact on Refugees set out; and for direct and sustained investment in the regions that bear the greatest burden of displacement, including in the social cohesion of host communities. We also call on all states to uphold their obligations to human rights standards and to ensure meaningful protection for those in need.

WE AFFIRM the principle of protection of internally displaced

7 persons, the stateless, and those whose displacement remains unrecognised under existing legal frameworks.

Internally displaced persons constitute the majority of the world's displaced and, in most contexts, remain more precarious than those who have crossed an international border. This includes inter-alia stateless people and those displaced by organised criminal violence. We commit to the documentation, the protection, the inclusion in national systems, and the durable solutions for these populations.



8 WE RECOGNISE displacement in the context of climate change as a protection concern

which affects millions, disproportionately within regions that have contributed least to the emissions producing it. We call for protection frameworks, durable solutions, and financing matched to the scale of climate displacement, within the existing protection regime and through regional and complementary frameworks,

9 WE AFFIRM gender-responsive protection that addresses interesting forms of discrimination and violence.

Protection must combat discrimination of all forms on such grounds as gender identity, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, age, disability, and any other status. The protection of women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and others who face compounded marginalisation requires a substantive response, not formal acknowledgement. Protection from sexual and gender-based violence is an element of a broader response to structural and intersecting violence.

10 WE CONTEND that effective, rights-based responses to displacement must be pursued in all relevant settings, not only within the global refugee regime.

The norms and institutions of the global refugee regime are essential elements of ensuring protection and solutions, but they alone are no longer sufficient to respond to the political, social and economic complexities of displacement today. Issues of displacement must be addressed by actors and institutions responsible for peacebuilding, development, and social issues, including labor, education, and health, at national, regional and global levels and across the United Nations System.

11 WE AFFIRM the importance of responses to displacement that are informed by the knowledge and priorities of those most affected by displacement.

We call for greater support for responses developed and led by actors on the frontlines of displacement, including refugee-led and other displaced-led organizations, who are able to identify responses that are effective, efficient and legitimate in the eyes of forcibly displaced populations. We also call for greater support for regional mechanisms, which have demonstrated their potential across the Global South to mobilize and sustain the engagement of the broad range of actors needed to ensure meaningful protection and access to solutions.

12 WE AFFIRM the dignity, agency, and rights of the displaced, including the right to work and to durable solutions of their choices.

The displaced are not victims to be administered, , or populations to be moved at the convenience of states. They are persons bearing rights and exercising agency. We commit to the right to work, education, health, and social protection on terms not less favourable than those of nationals; protection from exploitation in informal labour markets and trafficking; the protection of family unity; the inclusion of refugees in national systems; and meaningful refugee participation in the policies that govern them. Localised knowledge and refugee-led organisations are constitutive of credible protection, not supplementary to it. Refugees have a right to a durable solution: voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, local integration, resettlement, or complementary pathways. Where solutions are available, the preference of the displaced should be central to the choice; none should be coerced into return.