



Joint Statement: (Un)meaningful Participation at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in an Era of Visas and Restrictions on Freedom of Movement

We, the **Africa Refugee-Led Network (ARN)** and Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) from the Global South, are dedicated to advocating for Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP) and acknowledging the international community's strong commitment to inclusivity and the principle of leaving no one behind. However, we underline that the continuing imposition of restrictions on freedom of movement and visa requirements imposed on nationals of countries, largely from the global South, continue to act as systemic barriers to ensuring the meaningful inclusion of refugees and host communities in global policymaking processes that directly impact their lives and that of their communities.

In the face of visa restrictions and border controls that disproportionately impact those living in countries in the global South, refugees, host communities, and their organizations and initiatives are unable to fully engage in and influence policy-making processes so that they lead to better outcomes for refugees and host communities. The denial of visas to refugee and host community members to countries where policymaking processes are taking place are unfair, unjust, and contradict the international community's existing commitments to making global policy-making processes more inclusive and participatory. The Africa Refugee-Led Network (ARN) expresses its concerns and has prepared this statement to initiate a dialogue around the extent to which policy-making processes at the global level can be inclusive, participatory, and meaningful in an era of rising visa and border controls.

In addition, it is crucial to acknowledge that the involvement of refugee-led organizations from the global south at international platforms, such as the Global Refugee Forum, is driven by a desire to actively contribute to the discussions held during events. Organizations like the Africa Refugee-Led Network (ARN) and Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), among others, have been organizing linked events on the margins of the GRF 2023 to influence policy discussions so that refugee-led organizations can share their expertise, best practices, and innovative solutions in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by refugees globally. To that end, the ARN, together with the Refugee-Led Organizations Network (RELONs), Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), and the African Youth Action Network (AYAN), calls on the international community to work towards the following:

- 1) An easing of border restrictions and visa controls for refugee and host community members who seek to meaningfully engage in and influence policy- and decision-making processes that directly impact their lives in line with commitments to protect freedom of movement; and
- 2) A greater focus on shifting the organization of critical policy- and decision-making processes at the global level to be hosted in countries that impose fewer visa restrictions that impact the participation of refugees and host communities coming from countries in the global South.

Our organizations stand united in our commitment to meaningful refugee participation and the promotion of refugee and host community voices in decision-making processes at the international level.

End of the statement.