

STATEMENT FROM THE SPORT FOR REFUGEES COALITION AHEAD OF THE GRF PR 2025

As the number of forcibly displaced persons passes 120 million and deep funding cuts strain the humanitarian aid system, the prospects for building better futures for refugees are worsening. In this time of weakening global support, engaging non-traditional actors has never been more critical, and the sports community stands ready to play a vital role.

Sport has the potential to break down cultural barriers, improve physical and mental well-being, and create opportunities for more cohesive societies. Yet, despite this demonstrated potential, the role of sport in humanitarian responses continues to be overlooked and undervalued. As the members of the Sport for Refugees Coalition, we call for greater recognition and action to use sport in the protection and inclusion of people who have been forced to flee their homes.

Established at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, our Coalition has grown to more than 170 members representing the full spectrum of actors across the sports ecosystem, including governing bodies, member states, international organisations, civil society organisations and private companies – all united by a collective recognition of sport as a vital instrument in addressing many challenges resulting from displacement.

Since the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, more than 529,000 people affected by displacement have accessed sport- and play-based programmes in over 92 countries through our collective efforts. Over 11,000 coaches have been trained to deliver safe and inclusive sports activities, with over 160 sport spaces created or refurbished to improve access to safe sport. But we still face critical challenges that limit our collective impact.

Our Call to Action

Ahead of the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review, we call on all governments, humanitarian organisations, donors and sports bodies to:

- 1. Recognise the role of sport in contexts of displacement and pledge your commitment:** Acknowledge the power of sport and play-based initiatives, and invest in sport as a key tool for inclusion and resilience.
- 2. Incorporate sport across all pledging areas:** Sport can advance shared goals, from mental health and education to peaceful coexistence and digital integrity. Promote collaboration across multi-stakeholder pledges to drive collective impact.
- 3. Support meaningful participation of refugee-led and locally led organisations in sport:** Create inclusive pathways that recognise and strengthen the meaningful participation and leadership of people affected by displacement, ensuring the relevance of the solutions and fostering dignity and self-reliance among displaced populations.
- 4. Expand geographic diversity and amplify Low-and Middle-Income Countries' leadership:** Support and spotlight sport-based initiatives led from the regions most affected by displacement.
- 5. Strengthen local and national partnerships:** Collaborate across sectors - particularly Ministries of Sport, Health, Education and Youth - to embed sport into refugee responses.

Looking Ahead

As we move toward the Global Refugee Forum 2027, we urge Member States and individual pledging entities to embed sport in national and local refugee response frameworks. Let us work together to ensure that sport is part of a coordinated and equitable response to displacement. We must ensure that sport is no longer treated as a “nice-to-have”, but as a strategic priority and an accessible mechanism for the protection and inclusion of every person forced to flee.

THE SIGNATORIES

International Olympic Committee (IOC)
UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency – Co-Convenor
Olympic Refugee Foundation (ORF) – Co-Convenor
Scort Foundation – Co-Convenor
African Higher Education in Emergencies Network (AHEEN)
American Football for African Mission (AFFAM)
AVSI Foundation
Badminton World Federation (BWF)
Beyond Sport
British Olympic Association (BOA) / Team GB
Butterfly by Yusra Mardini
Canadian Olympic Committee (COC)
Chadian Olympic and Sports Committee
Coaches Across Continents
Columbia University, Program on Forced Migration and Health
FIBA
Fudela
Fundacja dla Wolności
Generation for Change CY
German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB)
GOALS Haiti
Guinea-Bissau Olympic Committee
Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC)
International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC)
International Hockey Federation (FIH)
International Judo Federation (IJF)
ITTF Foundation
Kabubu
Klabu
Ligue des Volontaires pour les Droits de l'Homme et l'environnement (LISVDHE)
Malawi Olympic Committee (MOC)
Movement in Refuge
National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark (DIF)
Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF)
Open Field
ORF Think Tank
Palestine Association for Children's Encouragement of Sports (PACES)

Palestine Sports for Life (PS4L)
Peace and Sport
Phambili Sport Impact
Play International
Quinta Ola
Reclaim Childhood
RUN Hong Kong
Slovak Olympic and Sports Committee (SOSC)
Swiss Academy for Development (SA4D)
Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation (THF)
Tambai Zimbabwe
Terre des Hommes
The National Olympic and Sports Committee of the Republic of Moldova (NOCM)
Threads of Peace
Turkish Olympic Committee (TOC)
UEFA
Uganda Olympic Committee (UOC)
Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)
Voix d'une Femme en Détresse : Women's Voice in Distress
WBD Sports
World Athletics
World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC)
World Dodgeball Federation (WDBF)
World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF)
World Rugby
World Taekwondo (WT)
Yoga and Sport with Refugees (YSR)
Yusra Mardini Foundation
Zimbabwe Olympic Committee (ZOC)