

# Global Concessional Financing Facility Steering Committee Meeting

December 16, 2024, by Video Conference

## Key Decisions

- *The Steering Committee approved the annotated outline of the GCFE Investment Case and requested the Coordination Unit to develop two products for external and internal communication: (i) detailed technical brief and (ii) communications-oriented pamphlet to be finalised and circulated in February 2025.*
- *At the request of the Government of the Netherlands, Armenia's initial one year period membership to the GCFE for 2024 was extended by the Steering Committee in accordance with paragraph 9 of the GCFE Operations Manual.*

## Summary of Meeting

### 1. Introductory Remarks

The co-chairs of the meeting, Mr. **Warner ten Kate**, Head of Migration and Displacement Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Representative of the Netherlands, and Mr. **Ion GUMENE**, Secretary of State, Ministry of Finance, Representative of Moldova, welcomed all participants to the GCFE Steering Committee (SC) meeting. Mr. **ten Kate** turned to Ms. **Nabila Assaf**, Manager of the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Group (FCV), World Bank for the roll call and introductory remarks.

Ms. **Assaf** welcomed participants to the SC meeting and informed that she is standing in for Ms. **Soukeyna Kane**, Director of the FCV Group, World Bank, who is retiring at the end of the month. Ms. **Assaf** conveyed Ms. **Kane's** deep gratitude to the Supporting Countries, Benefiting Countries (BCs), ISAs and other partners in addressing the impact of protracted displacement and the needs of refugees and host communities alike. Ms. **Assaf** added that the new FCV Director Mr. **Shubham Chaudhuri**, will be introduced in the next SC meeting.

Ms. **Assaf** updated that on 5 December, the SC approved a Funding Request for the IBRD supported Social Safety Net Project Additional Financing for Ecuador. The project aims at improvements in targeting and delivery of integrated benefits and services and exit strategy of less vulnerable population including refugees, migrants and Ecuadorians. This is the first project to be supported in the LAC region since February 2023 and would not have been possible without the continued support and generosity of the United States.

Ms. **Assaf** provided an overview of the agenda and concluded by wishing all members happy holidays, and a productive year ahead for the GCFF.

### **Update on TAG Meeting**

Prior to commencement of official meeting agenda items, Mr. **ten Kate** turned to Mr. **Spyros Demetriou**, Program Manager GCFF for a brief overview of the TAG meeting. *(Please find copy of meeting summary in attachment).*

### **Item for Presentation/Discussion:**

#### **Country Updates**

**Introduction of the agenda item.** Mr. **ten Kate** introduced the presentation item. Mr. **ten Kate** noted that with the dramatic events over the past 10 days in Syria, the UNHCR was requested to provide an initial and preliminary update on the situation in Syria and neighbouring countries. In addition, the Coordination Unit (CU) will provide updates on the refugee policy and protection priorities dialogue process in Jordan and Lebanon and discussions related to Egypt for possible support from GCFF.

**Presentations.** Mr. **ten Kate** first invited the representative of UNHCR, Mr. **Alexander Tyler**, Deputy Director Regional Bureau for MENA for presentation/briefing on Syria followed by Mr. **Demetriou**, for a brief on the Dialogue Process and Egypt.

Mr. **Tyler**, informed that there is cautious optimism among Syrian refugees in the neighbouring countries and there has been some cross border movement. While the numbers are minimal from Jordan, around 7,000 have left Türkiye and 10,000 from Lebanon. Based on UNHCR's outreach and engagement with refugees, many are waiting for the situation to unfold with governance and security primary factors in determining any possible returns. Mr. **Tyler** noted that due to on-going military operations in the country, up to 1.5 million people have been internally displaced in the areas of Aleppo, Homs, Hama and North-East Syria. Further there has been a larger inflow into north Lebanon consisting of an estimated 60,000-70,000 people including Lebanese and Syrian minority communities. Mr. **Tyler** noted that the UNHCR has issued an advisory on returns of Syrian refugees, advocating for a safe and dignified process. At the same time urging patience and continued support for neighbouring hosting countries through the GCFF, as the UNHCR foresees a long process for returns while the situation in Syria develops with refugees in the neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan and Lebanon still needing access and support to services and assistance. Mr. **Tyler** concluded by saying that from a stability point of view, it is critical to continue investing in refugee human capital in neighbouring countries and avoid premature returns which could exacerbate the delicate situation in Syria and have regional implications. A comprehensive approach entailing listening to refugee's choices, continued support to host countries while engaging on improving conditions in Syria will be required.

Mr. **Demetriou** informed that developments over the past few months in Lebanon have precluded any advancements on the country dialogue process. The CU has been in contact with the Government and aims to restart the process as soon as possible, and notes that there is funding available in the Lebanon window. With regard to Jordan, the CU will follow-up with the Government on the dialogue process and keep the SC posted on developments in both countries.

Mr. **Demetriou** concluded by appraising the SC that while there have been some discussions on possible GCFE support to Egypt among donors, there has been no further communication from the Government of Egypt. Through the World Bank country office, the CU is engaged and will update SC on any further developments.

Mr. **Emad Shanaah**, Director General Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) updated the SC on the Jordan country level dialogue that took place on 15 December, wherein the Government presented and discussed 2024-25 pipeline with GCFE stakeholders, highlighted major accomplishments achieved through GCFE supported projects and urged for continued support for both refugees and host communities.

**Discussion.** Following the presentation Mr. **ten Kate** opened the floor for comments and questions.

Ms. **Ola Hisou**, FCV Group, in terms of the refugee numbers referred to in the update, are these numbers of registered refugees with UNHCR and is there any flexibility/freedom of movement for those refugees who returned to Syria and may come back to Lebanon and Jordan.

**Germany** requested insights on the gender perspective and minorities views on returns.

**European Commission** asked about the status of the Refugee Policy and Protection Review (RPPR) for Jordan and Lebanon.

Mr. **Tyler** noted that there is a mix of visa status among Syrian refugees crossing the various borders, there is also a new profile of people leaving Syria due to the changed political set-up. Finally with respect to the Lebanese border policy, there are inflow and outflow crossings, however, the Government would be best placed to speak on the official policy. With regard to the security situation in the country particularly for women, boys and minorities, there is concern and a key factor in deciding whether to stay in the neighbouring countries or return. On Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) policies towards these groups, while UNHCR seen positive signals, given past experience, there is reason for caution. As the situation pans out, a clearer understanding will develop.

Mr. **Demetriou** informed that the country dialogue process approved by the SC was aimed at engaging with all BCs in a positive and constructive discussion on refugee policy and protection challenges, opportunities and priorities. The RPPR constitutes one input into the overall dialogue process. The Dialogue Process was envisaged to commence in autumn however due to the recent conflict could not be organised. The CU will be engaging with the Government of Lebanon to try and initiate the process soon. With regard to Jordan, the UNHCR has already started to develop the RPPR, and with the country level meeting having been organised in Amman, the CU will be coordinating with MOPIC to plan for the Dialogue Process in 2025.

**Conclusion.** Mr. **ten Kate** thanked the presenters and SC members for the productive discussion and closed the agenda item.

## Item for Presentation/Discussion

### Second Independent Evaluation of GCFF

**Introduction of the agenda item.** Mr. **Gumene** introduced the agenda item. Mr. **Gumene** noted that based on the SC's approval in the last meeting for developing a TOR for the Second Independent Evaluation (IE) of GCFF, the CU will present the latest draft of the TOR. Mr. **Gumene** added that the TAG has already provided feedback on the draft TOR which was incorporated in the current document. Based on the discussions today and written comments from SC members received by January 10, 2025, the CU will share the final version with the SC for approval on virtual no-objection basis by late January 2025.

**Presentation.** Mr. **Gumene** first turned to Mr. **Demetriou**, who provided an overview of the rationale, objective and scope of the Second IE of GCFF. Mr. **Demetriou** highlighted the significance and timing of the IE in relation to the future of the Facility. He also noted that the cost of the evaluation is not currently included in the CU's budget for FY25, and the SC will be requested to allocate additional resources related to the evaluation budget. This intervention was followed by a presentation by Ms. **Sarah Craig**. *(Please find copy of presentation in attachment).*

**Discussion.** Following the presentation Mr. **Gumene** thanked the presenters and opened the floor for comments and questions.

**Norway** expressed its satisfaction with the draft TOR, noting that the comments shared during the TAG review are well-reflected in the revised draft TOR, and looked forward to conduction of the exercise.

**The United States** acknowledged the comprehensive TOR and appreciated the iterative process outlined for the IE exercise. **The United States** stressed the importance of the evaluation addressing questions related to potential expansion of GCFF to new Benefiting Countries, including how such decisions relate to GCFF's strategic positioning and achievement of GCFF objectives, results, and learning, as well as implications for Supporting Countries' engagement and support.

**Conclusion.** Mr. **Gumene** thanked members for the productive discussion and looked forward to receiving the final TOR for virtual no-objection basis in January 2025.

## Item for Presentation/Decision

### GCFF Investment Case

**Introduction of the agenda item.** Mr. **ten Kate** introduced the agenda item. Mr. **ten Kate** noted that during the SC meeting in Chişinău in June, members requested the CU to develop an Investment Case Note to inform advocacy and outreach on the GCFF. Mr. **ten Kate** added that the current draft incorporates comments provided by TAG.

**Presentation:** Mr. **ten Kate** turned to Mr. **Demetriou** for the presentation. *(Please find copy of presentation in attachment).*

**Discussion.** Following the presentation, Mr. **ten Kate** opened the floor for comments and questions.

**Germany** appreciated the outline and structure of the Investment Case. Germany recommended adding a gender perspective in the Note to highlight gender equality and participation.

**The United States** expressed satisfaction with the outline and development of two products for internal and external stakeholders. **The United States** recommended to add the “strategic ask” in the way forward section to clearly articulate realistic financial needs for the medium term (2-3 years). **The United States** suggested to include concrete country examples spotlighting GCFF’s impact and also asked the CU to peruse the recently published Pandemic Funds Investment Case for reference.

**The Coordination Unit** thanked SC members for the useful feedback which will be duly reflected the two products.

Mr. **ten Kate** thanked SC members for the productive discussion.

Mr. **ten Kate** then read the text of the decision.

### **Decision**

*The Steering Committee approved the annotated outline of the GCFF Investment Case and requested the Coordination Unit to develop two products for external and internal communication: (i) detailed technical brief and (ii) communications-oriented pamphlet to be finalised and circulated in February 2025.*

### **Item for Discussion:**

#### **Rotation of the Co-Chairmanship of the GCFF Steering Committee**

**Introduction of the agenda item.** Mr. **Gumene** introduced the agenda item. Mr. **Gumene** noted that in accordance with paragraph 50 of the GCFF Operations Manual new Co-Chairs of the GCFF Steering Committee will be selected by consensus for a one-year term. Accordingly new Co-Chairs from among the Supporting Countries and BCs are to be selected by the SC.

Mr. **Gumene** informed members that consultations have begun with the Supporting Countries and BCs to identify candidates for the Co-Chairmanship. Mr. **Gumene** then requested Mr. **Demetriou** to update the SC on the nominations and process so far. Mr. **Demetriou** informed that from the Supporting Countries side Japan has expressed interest in assuming the Co-Chairmanship in 2025. From the BCs, the Republic of Armenia and Jordan have officially conveyed interest for taking on the role of Co-Chair. Enquires have also been made by the Government of Lebanon with regard to the possibility of Co-Chairship, but no formal communication has been conveyed to the CU. Mr.

**Demetriou** proposed that all SC members communicate their preferences for the two Chair positions by email, with deadline by middle of January. The CU will facilitate this process as it did last year and communicate by email the results of this informal vote in mid-January to the SC for virtual decision on a no-objection basis.

Mr. **Gumene** thanked Mr. **Demetriou** for the proposed process and then gave the floor to each interested country to deliver a short statement on their candidature.

**Jordan** stated the importance of partnerships and collective action for addressing the global refugee crises and expressed its interest in assuming the Co-Chairmanship of the GCFF. Jordan noted that the GCFF brings development and humanitarian actors on one platform enabling a wholistic approach to support host communities and refugees to make a significant impact.

**Armenia** noted that its role and experience in managing various humanitarian crises enables it to make meaningful contributions to the critical work and mission of the GCFF as Co-Chairs. Armenia also highlighted the efforts made for supporting and integrating refugees from Syria and currently from Nagorno-Karabakh and looked forward to working with GCFF partners in sustaining support to host communities and refugees in all BCs.

**Japan** recognised the exceptional leadership of Moldova and The Netherlands Co-Chairmanship during 2024. Japan expressed interest in assuming the Co-Chairmanship of the GCFF and looked forward to contributing to the IE, future direction of the GCFF and continued support to existing and potential BCs.

Mr. **Gumene** thanked the representatives of Armenia, Jordan and Japan for their interest in Co-Chairship of the SC and look forward to the conclusion of the process for rotation of the Co-Chairmanship in January.

Following this Members of the SC in unison appreciated the exemplary and proactive leadership of the incumbent Co-Chairs. Members recognised the Co-Chairs tremendous efforts and energy dedicated to strengthening resourcing for the GCFF during the past year, which has led to continued support for the BCs. Lastly members thanked the Co-Chairs for their guidance and support in making the in-person SC meeting in Chişinău a resounding success.

**Government of Ecuador** thanked the SC for continued support particularly with the recently approved Social Safety Net Project Additional Financing that the United States contribute to.

The session concluded with Mr. **ten Kate** and Mr. **GUMENE** personal reflections on their year as Co-Chairs of the GCFF SC.

### **Item for Presentation:**

### **Update on GCFF Financial Overview**

**Introduction of the agenda item.** Mr. **ten Kate** introduced the agenda item. Mr. **ten Kate** noted that with the end of the CY and efforts undertaken during the past year for strengthening support to BCs, the GCFF Trustee will provide a financial overview, which will followed by an update on

contributions from Supporting Countries based on pledges made during the GCFE Steering Committee meeting in Chişinău.

**Presentation.** Mr. **ten Kate** turned to Ms. **Larissa Vovk**, Trustee for a presentation on the financial overview *(Please find copy of presentation in attachment)*.

This was followed by a presentation on pledges and contributions by Mr. **Demetriou**, *(Please find copy of presentation in attachment)*.

**Discussion.** Following the presentation Mr. **ten Kate** thanked the presenters and opened the floor for comments and questions.

**The United States** clarified that contributions this year to the GCFE have been to the ECA and LAC windows.

**The United Kingdom** will make a contribution of £4 million in early 2025, with the recipient window and country to be determined.

**Conclusion.** Mr. **ten Kate** thanked members for the productive discussion.

#### **Any other Business/ Closing Remarks by Co-Chairs**

Mr. **ten Kate** appraised the SC, that Armenia was added as the seventh BC to the GCFE at the request of the Government of the Netherlands for an initial one-year period in December 2023. With the time period completing, Mr. **ten Kate** proposed extension of Armenia's access to the GCFE. With no objections received from SC members, Armenia's membership in the GCFE was extended.

#### **Decision**

*At the request of the Government of the Netherlands, Armenia's initial one year period membership to the GCFE for 2024 was extended by the Steering Committee in accordance with paragraph 9 of the GCFE Operations Manual.*

Mr. **ten Kate** and Mr. **Gumene** thanked the SC membership for a productive meeting and wished all happy holidays.

**Annex 1: Roll Call –December 16, 2024**

*You will proceed with the roll call. The Coordination Unit will complete the table and share it with the minutes of the meeting. Next, you will list the countries and then invite the observers of the Steering Committee (including UNHCR, IMF, UNDP, etc.) to confirm their participation.*

<b>Member (for roll call)</b>	
<b>Armenia</b>	x
<b>Costa Rica</b>	
<b>Colombia</b>	
<b>Ecuador</b>	x
<b>Jordan</b>	x
<b>Lebanon</b>	
<b>Moldova</b>	x
<b>Canada</b>	x
<b>Denmark</b>	x
<b>European Commission</b>	x
<b>Germany</b>	x
<b>Japan</b>	x
<b>the Netherlands</b>	x
<b>Norway</b>	x
<b>United Kingdom</b>	x
<b>United States</b>	x
	x