

Item 8. Programme budgets and funding

Introductory remarks at the Standing Committee meeting
of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner

Room XIX, Palais des Nations
15-17 March 2016

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,

As you heard from my colleagues since the beginning of this session of the Standing Committee, we are living in an era in which old conflicts persist and new ones emerge with increasing frequency. Fifteen new conflicts have broken out or reignited in the past five six years while old ones remain, with no resolution. The impact on persons of concern to UNHCR has been dramatic with more than 60 million people now forcibly displaced globally.

While more than 80% of the world's displaced are hosted in the developing world, more and more people are embarking on the desperate journey to Europe, despite the enormous risks and cost this entails to lives. No efforts should be spared to address the root causes of displacement. But in the meantime, absent a political solution, host States must be supported to be able to continue providing protection to millions on behalf of the international community.

Many of these States are crucial pillars of peace and stability in their regions. Their role is one on which we all depend as the present crisis in Europe has illustrated.

The magnitude and multitude of crises around the world make it very difficult to deliver adequate responses. The humanitarian community is at a crossroads, with needs far exceeding resources. The scale of global forced displacement, as well as the response required, outpaces anything seen since World War II.

We are deeply grateful to you – UNHCR's donors but also to private citizens, corporations and foundations – who together provided a record USD 3.4 billion last year. Available funds in 2015 amounted to over USD 3.6 billion. Yet, despite this extraordinary generosity, and despite the series of cost-saving measures implemented by the High Commissioner, the funding gap has grown in 2015, reaching a historic level.

UNHCR's comprehensive budget at the end of 2015 totalled over USD 7.2 billion, including USD 1.1 billion to respond to 10 emergency situations across the globe. This represents a funding gap of some USD 3.5 billion, or nearly 50 per cent of our total requirements.

I can assure you that we have spared no effort to explore all funding opportunities, in particular from emerging donors and the private sector. The Director of the Division of External Relations will share with you some detailed information on the progress we have made on broadening our donor base.

The consequence of this is that, in some areas, we are no longer able to meet even the absolute minimum requirements of core protection and lifesaving assistance to preserve

human dignity.

Unfortunately, there is no indication that the context in which we operated last year will improve this year. In October last year, the Executive Committee approved an annual budget for 2016 of US\$ 6.5 billion. This budget has already grown to over US\$ 7 billion in response to the Burundi, Yemen and Europe emergencies and for increasing our capacity to respond to resettlement requirements.

Mr. Chairman,

As others have noted at this week's Standing Committee, we need to rethink the way the world finances the response to humanitarian crises; this is urgent. The High-level Panel on Humanitarian financing established by the UN Secretary General last year looked at ways to mobilize greater and more predictable funding for humanitarian operations and to ensure resources are used efficiently.

UNHCR welcomes the report of the Panel which outlines innovative, constructive and concrete recommendations, and is committed to fully support actions to improve the way humanitarian aid is mobilized and delivered. As the Director of External Relations relayed yesterday, UNHCR also fully subscribes to the Grand Bargain's call for putting people at the centre of humanitarian reform; closer collaboration between agencies and donors to gain greater efficiency; greater flexibility by donors and greater transparency by agencies. We will again participate in discussions tomorrow in Brussels on this topic and will continue to keep the Standing Committee informed.

Renewed efforts are vital, including innovative approaches to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and ensuring that displacement is addressed as both a development and a humanitarian challenge. In reference to earlier discussions, development actors – supported by development budgets – have to work side by side with humanitarians from the very onset of a crisis to help us prevent further conflict, support host communities and pave the way for durable solutions. UNHCR has been working hard to strengthen its partnership with development actors. We are making excellent progress in our cooperation with the World Bank. We have also been working closely with UNDP in the Solutions Alliance.

Much remains to be done to bring about the cultural change that is necessary to facilitate closer links between humanitarian and development interventions. In this regard, the commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, including refugees and other displaced persons, provides a solid platform.

Thanks again to you – the Standing Committee – for your unfailing support which is crucial in these challenging times and on which we will depend this year and in the years to come.

Thank you.