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Statement by Terry Morel,
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Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,
The High Commissioner's strategic directions are clear, we must be ready to respond to emergencies and deliver protection and solutions wherever and whenever, and our greatest strength lies in our field presence. It is the responsibility of the Division of Human Resources to facilitate and service our colleagues in achieving these goals. Since mid-2017, Bangladesh has gone from 42 to 254 staff members. We have 142 more staff, international and national, working in Latin America to respond to the recent events. In the last 12 months, we have issued eight emergency fast tracks and assigned and deployed 250 international colleagues within six weeks from the time of the vacancy announcement, in addition to our regular monthly assignment processes.

As our operations constantly adapt, grow, shrink and/or change direction, they need extensive Human Resources support and we must rise to the challenge. In addition to filling posts quickly with suitable staff, we are tasked to ensure people are medically fit for work, mentally prepared, trained and fully informed of the living and security conditions they will face. We must provide for an inclusive and respectful work environment, with a gender and geographically balanced workforce. Processes must be fair and transparent, sensitive to the needs and aspirations of our colleagues.

We have a global workforce of almost 16,000, over 6,500 women and 9,000 men working in 475 locations, with 42% in hardship duty stations. Perhaps, our first responsibility is to the almost 3,000 colleagues assigned to 90 high risk, deep field locations where they often face security threats, isolation and harsh living conditions. Our new Administrative Instruction on high risk duty stations provides strengthened support before, during and post deployment to both national and international staff and ensures colleagues are aware of the conditions on the ground, and have access to psychological support and can make informed choices.

The external review of Human Resources finalised in March this year, highlighted that to be sufficiently agile and able to adapt quickly in today's world through a strong and well cared for workforce, we require a transformed Human Resources model. One which is more strategic and field facing. As a result, we have set a three-year road map with a focus on five strategic priorities: Human resources as a strategic partner to operations; effective workforce management; equipped leaders; enabling work environment and culture; and robust foundations for service delivery. We will monitor its implementation and the impact of the Division's transformation on personnel and operations.

The Division is being reconfigured to move strategic HR services closer to the field, in line with the broader organizational change and decentralization work. This will strengthen our workforce analysis and succession planning capacity, and we will upgrade our human resources IT systems, and data management and analysis in order to gain efficiencies. One example is the current transition to a fully electronic online system for personnel administration which will allow for speedy contract issuance and reduce processing times for entitlements and benefits.

Our regional Human Resources teams will be able to better anticipate operational changes and the profiles required as situations evolve. With such a large global workforce, our Human Resources services need to be fully integrated into our operations in order to identify talent, nurture and motivate people and support their careers. Regionalization will bring increased opportunities for national staff and affiliate workforce and access to new talent.

An estimated one quarter of UNHCR's workforce is affiliate personnel. It is our responsibility to ensure inclusiveness and to minimize the differences among the various affiliate schemes. Recognizing their critical contributions to the organization, we have facilitated their eligibility to apply to international posts.

One year into the implementation of the new Recruitment and Assignments policy, we can report that 166 individuals, of whom 52% were women, were recruited into the international professional category through vacancies advertised since October 2017. 27% from Africa, 9% from MENA, 17% from Asia & the Pacific, 16% from the Americas, and 31% from Europe. Increasing recruitment from the south is critical and the HR regional teams will play an important role in this.

Persons of concern to UNHCR come from all walks of life, and represent a rich diversity of cultures, religions, and backgrounds, with often above average rates of women and children among them. To facilitate easy access to persons of concern and ensure we fully capture their protection risks, our workforce also needs to be gender balanced and diverse. This also contributes to the quality of our programming and generates innovative thinking. So we now provide managers with dashboards and information on gender and geographic diversity in their operations and regions to fully inform their decision making.

Our aim is to achieve gender parity, in line with the Secretary General's goal. For any advertised position, at least two-thirds of the shortlisted candidates must be female. With the new policy, we have seen a 14% increase of female appointments to a higher grade between October 2017 and June 2018 compared to the same reporting period a year before. We must also seize the opportunities that retirement can provide. With 249 male colleagues, in comparison to 97 females, due to retire in the next five years, we expect steady progress towards meeting the Secretary General's target.

Achieving diversity sometimes requires a pro-active stance. We must provide appropriate working conditions in order to increase opportunities to hire persons with disabilities, as well as gather more precise data, although it can be challenging if it requires self-identification. We welcome the UN-wide review on the rights of persons with disabilities, which has led to UNHCR recently establishing a working group on inclusion of staff living with disabilities.

Our efforts towards inclusion and gender balance are also supported by the January 2018 revised Parental Leave Administrative Instruction, which provides for more equitable access to parental leave and longer maternity leave. Another key piece is the policy on Flexible Working Arrangements, which is also under review.

Recently, formal and informal networks, such as the Inclusion, Diversity and Gender Equity Challenge Team, have enabled multiple voices and perspectives within the Organization to be heard. This demonstrates a new way of working where colleagues can help shape and influence the direction of human resources.

Our increased focus on leadership and management will support the identification and development of a diverse, gender-balanced, trained leadership pool. Our Global Learning Centre is finalizing a framework that outlines what leadership in UNHCR should consist of in line with the UN-wide reform. The Global Learning Centre will also work on better linking performance, career development and learning to ensure a coordinated response to individuals as recommended by the HR Review.

We have a 96.3% compliance rate in the area of performance evaluation, but we are concerned about the quality of the process. This challenge was highlighted by staff at large in our consultations in 2017, and reaffirmed by the HR review. During the review, the experience of our peer agencies, UNICEF, ICRC and WFP were also analysed and valuable inputs shared. Acceptance of honest performance conversations and developing the skills in managing these requires a cultural shift. In the last quarter, we will initiate a global dialogue to identify and agree on the professional behaviours we expect from each other, and our managers, in upholding our values and principles. The anticipated outcome will be a strengthened performance culture.

Duty of care is a priority for the organization. Measures to improve living conditions include the construction and refurbishment of staff housing and recreational areas, the installation of water systems, and projects to reduce dependency on non-renewable energy. 15% of our workforce sought counselling in 2017, mostly on issues related to working conditions, workplace relationships and critical incidents. Staff welfare officers visited 89 duty stations in 51 countries for regular or emergency support. We issued the Administrative Instruction on Medical Evacuation and Other Medical Travel which enabled 364 individuals with chronic diseases, mainly national staff, to receive timely and quality health support.

Of course, our work cannot be done without our partners and our inter-agency collaboration. We are currently benefitting from the experiences and perspectives of 8 colleagues who have joined us from UN sister agencies and governments. At the same time, we have 23 UNHCR colleagues on loan to others. These exchanges are critical to developing our thinking and remaining dynamic and creative.

Our work at the interagency level is focused on improving and modernising Human Resources in the United Nations, with a particular emphasis on the needs of our field operations. Your efforts to ensure an International Civil Service Commission equipped to understand, support and respond to the realities of our colleagues in the deep field are most important.

As we undertake the transformation of our human resources, it is first and foremost about creating the optimal conditions for the people who work for UNHCR to best serve our persons of concern, building on their strengths, and experiences, and fostering an enabling environment that supports and nurtures.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

We count on your continued support to accompany us in this transformation and to be bold and outward-looking.

Thank you.