

**NOTE ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION  
(EC/73/SC/CRP.10)**

**Remarks by the Director of the Division of International Protection,  
Mrs. Elizabeth Tan**

**Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High  
Commissioner's Programme (84TH meeting)**

**GENEVA, 28 JUNE 2022**

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

*Introduction: Advancing protection in challenging circumstances*

- It is an honour for me to address the Standing Committee for the first time since assuming my new role as Director of the Division of International Protection (DIP). I take this opportunity to thank Member States of the Executive Committee for their cooperation with DIP on all aspects of our work - and for their efforts in upholding international protection standards and the rights of the persons we serve, often in challenging conditions.
- I am pleased to introduce the High Commissioner's 2022 Note on International Protection. Addressing the theme of access to rights, the Note recognizes the many ways in which States facilitate and ensure access to rights for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless persons, and internally displaced persons. At the same time, it acknowledges that access to rights is also impeded in many situations.

*Access to protection*

- In a challenging period, in which UNHCR has declared 42 new emergencies in 18 months, ensuring that displaced and stateless persons have access to and enjoy their rights remains complex. UNHCR has observed troubling instances of refoulement during the reporting period, including arbitrary and collective expulsions, denial of entry at borders and violent pushbacks. In some countries, far-reaching restrictions on entry prevent asylum-seekers from entering territory, purportedly to manage COVID-19 – despite the fact that the vast majority of States have now shown that infection risks can be addressed while maintaining access to asylum.

- Recent months have seen positive examples of States providing effective access to protection – including in South America where Colombia and other countries continued to offer temporary stay to Venezuelans. In Europe, temporary protection has also been extended to millions fleeing Ukraine. Responses to Ukrainians – from States, but also by citizens who have generously opened their homes or provided other support – demonstrates clearly that where the will exists, swift access to protection can be provided, including in situations of mass influx. It has also highlighted the central importance of access, without discrimination, to safe territory and international protection for ALL those who need it.

### *Mixed movements and asylum/migration*

- In mixed movements, involving refugees as well as migrants not in need of international protection, UNHCR works with partners to promote respect for the basic rights of all those on the move, regardless of status - while recognizing the specific legal position of refugees. Strong partnerships are key to the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration, a goal which UNHCR actively supports within the UN Migration Network, alongside IOM and others. We were pleased to contribute to the first International Migration Review Forum this year, and to see the strong interest it has generated in addressing migration challenges - which, if tackled effectively, can reinforce support for migrants' rights, as well as for asylum systems and protection space.
- This year has also seen extensive engagement and progress in anti-trafficking activities, including during UNHCR's co-chairing of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) in 2021.
- Fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures, operating without discrimination and reflecting key safeguards, are essential to protect the rights of refugees. In 2021-22, States and UNHCR implemented innovative practices, using technology to support asylum systems, manage registration, and process document renewal online. The Asylum Capacity Support Group, a key support mechanism under the Global Compact on Refugees, documents these good practices, and holds great promise to deliver more, with support from Member States and other stakeholders, to advance solidarity and responsibility sharing.

Mr Chairman,

- Xenophobia and negative perceptions of people on the move can jeopardize access to rights and services. UNHCR is committed to combatting racism, intolerance, and discrimination against displaced and stateless populations, whether for racial, ethnic, religious, or other reasons.
- Over the last year, access to education for displaced and stateless children and youth posed a significant challenge in many regions. Barriers included documentation, limits on capacity of local schools and teachers, and poverty, compelling many school age children to work. Positively, many of our partners are working with UNHCR to ensure greater access to scholarships and other forms of support, with enormous potential to change children's' lives.
- The Global Compact on Refugees highlights the importance of engagement with displaced persons. In 2021, UNHCR developed a plan to strengthen accountability to affected people. The plan addresses organizational resources, capacity, advocacy, coordination, and leadership. It also recognizes that meaningful participation is rooted in community-based protection.
- Prevention, risk mitigation and response to gender-based violence remains vital. As part of the UNHCR deployment scheme linked to the Safe from the Start initiative, specialists provided support to emergency operations worldwide to address this harmful and under-reported human rights violation.

### *IDPs and statelessness*

- The worldwide IDP population increased to 51.3 million in 2021, the highest level ever recorded. In the 33 countries where we engage in situations of internal displacement, protection lies at the heart of UNHCR's engagement, including on prevention, response and solutions. With the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs and in our lead role of the Global Protection Cluster, UNHCR launched the IDP Protection Expert Group to support states and the UN in protection responses to internal displacement.

- UNHCR works closely with states on IDP law and policy, where important progress has been made in ratification of the Kampala Convention, with DRC and Ethiopia bringing the total number of ratifications to 33, as well as countries where legal policy frameworks have been strengthened, such as Mexico, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mozambique, and Nigeria.
- Stateless people too often lack legal protection and have difficulty accessing basic rights. Important headway has been made on the 2014 Global Action Plan to end Statelessness, with more than 400,000 stateless people in 27 countries acquiring nationality over the past year, and legislative reform paving the way for tens of thousands of people across the globe to obtain citizenship. Twenty-nine States also acceded to the statelessness conventions. Limits on reliable data on statelessness continue to hamper progress on its identification and reduction. Current statistics cover only 96 countries, with a total number of 4.3 million stateless persons.

### *Solutions*

- Access to durable solutions remains, unquestionably, a central – but too often elusive - goal. Prospects for large-scale return to some countries, including Afghanistan, Myanmar and Syria, continue to be limited by insecurity and conflict, and millions of refugees remain in protracted situations worldwide. Nevertheless, UNHCR remains fully committed to expanding voluntary repatriation, alongside other durable solutions. We have been glad to see positive progress on return in some regions of the world, including in West and East Africa.
- In many regions, UNHCR has worked closely with states, other partners and refugees to support their self-reliance, inclusion in national systems and services and access to documentation and legal residence. Third country solutions, including resettlement and complementary pathways, remain key priorities for UNHCR. I will elaborate further on progress and challenges in durable solutions in my presentation on the solutions paper tomorrow.

Mr. Chairman,

- While the past year has seen persisting as well as new challenges in securing access to rights, protection and solutions, we are heartened by the efforts and engagement of many states and other stakeholders to work with UNHCR - as well as with refugees, asylum-seekers, IDPs and stateless people - to overcome them. More commitments to protection and solutions will be needed. Preparations for next year's Global Refugee Forum offer a vital opportunity to advance on many concrete areas to translate pledges into action to realise the rights of all those fleeing persecution and enhance burden and responsibility-sharing in concrete and impactful ways.

Thank you.