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**Emergency preparedness and response***Summary*

This paper presents developments in the areas of emergency preparedness and response since the last update provided to the eighty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2022 (EC/73/SC/CRP.11). The deterioration of humanitarian crises around the world has provided renewed impetus for UNHCR to reflect on and further strengthen its emergency preparedness and response. In this context, the paper highlights the commitment of UNHCR to being a predictable and reliable partner in responding to emergencies, whether triggered by conflict, climate change, or a combination of both.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In 2022, the number of forcibly displaced worldwide exceeded 100 million people. In the immediate term, UNHCR responded to the unprecedented humanitarian needs by scaling up its preparedness, emergency deployments and supply capacity and increasing the number of relevant emergency trainings. The unprecedented situation in Ukraine and neighbouring countries also triggered a period of reflection, during which UNHCR embarked on a review and update of its emergency procedures, where needed.
2. The underlying causes of forced displacement are increasingly interconnected. In many parts of the world, whether directly or indirectly, climate change is triggering conflict and violence. Like the climate crisis itself, these overlapping risks tend to hit vulnerable people the hardest, especially women and girls. In this context, UNHCR continued to promote an age, gender and diversity approach throughout its preparedness and response activities.
3. Consistent with the Office's commitment to strong and predictable engagement in an emergency, and in light of the complicated risk landscape, UNHCR emphasized the importance of proactive preparedness, including risk analysis, contingency planning and anticipatory actions.

### **A. Preparedness actions**

4. In 2022, UNHCR continued to promote proactive emergency preparedness and early action. In order to do so, UNHCR simplified and streamlined guidance, tools and procedures. The two emergency preparedness packages for internally displaced persons and refugees were combined into a single, concise emergency preparedness guidance. It emphasizes the importance of contingency planning for country operations at high risk of an emergency. Similarly, to ensure an efficient and comprehensive contingency planning process, the existing contingency plan templates for emergencies involving refugees and internally displaced persons were merged.
5. Through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's monthly early warning, early action and readiness process, UNHCR played a proactive role in global horizon scanning for emergency risks, especially those related to natural hazards and climate change. UNHCR actively engaged with the meteorological subgroup of the early warning, early action and readiness working group, and strengthened global and regional collaboration with expert bodies such as the World Meteorological Organization. Additionally, UNHCR collaborated closely with other United Nations agencies and independent specialists in the areas of early warning, risk analysis and humanitarian assessment.
6. During 2022, 20 country operations identified a high risk of a new or escalated emergency, and received support with risk analysis, contingency planning, and addressing preparedness gaps. The operations and regional bureaux efforts were constantly reinforced through regular meetings, field missions, technical guidance, and capacity development activities at global, regional and country levels. Products, such as regional risk snapshots and visualizations, were made available through the newly created comprehensive internal Emergency Preparedness and Response Portal.

### **B. Capacity development**

7. During the reporting period UNHCR trained more than 370 staff and partner personnel on emergency preparedness and response. While many of the virtual capacity development activities established during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continued, UNHCR re-introduced in-person workshops on emergency management for emergency roster team members. Three context-specific emergency trainings were also delivered for country operations which were identified to be at high risk of an emergency. In addition, UNHCR provided training for senior managers selected for the senior corporate emergency roster.

8. Furthermore, UNHCR provided guidance and trainings on emergency preparedness and response for an external audience. On behalf of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNHCR trained 37 members of different humanitarian organizations through the Emergency Team Leadership Programme. UNHCR continued upgrading its Emergency Handbook, a digital reference tool for UNHCR staff and partners in emergencies, with a view to launching the upgraded version by the second quarter of 2023. From January 2023, to meet the increasing demand to respond to emergencies, UNHCR will double the number of emergency response roster members available for immediate emergency deployment to 240 per year and consequently double the number of relevant emergency trainings.

### **III. Delivery of emergency response**

#### **A. Overview of emergencies and policy implementation**

9. In 2022, UNHCR declared 35 emergencies in 25 countries. Over 60 per cent of these declarations were for level 2 or level 3 emergencies, either requiring increased support from the regional bureaux or an organisation-wide response. These level 2 and level 3 emergencies were twice as many than in the previous year, illustrating the growing scale and complexity of humanitarian crises globally.

10. UNHCR declared level 3 emergencies for the internal displacement situation within Ukraine, and for the refugee movement into Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. In addition to the emergency deployments and guidance provided including on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment from the outset, the rapid scale-up of emergency response for the Ukraine situation benefitted from a real-time review. This review process took stock of achievements and challenges faced during the emergency response, and made recommendations for course correction at global, regional and country levels.

11. As part of its commitment to be a decisive and reliable partner in disasters, Level 2 emergencies were declared in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia to respond to increased displacement caused by the effects of drought in the Horn of Africa such as crop failure, loss of livestock, increased food prices, water scarcity and drought-induced conflict. Immediate life-saving interventions were prioritized for refugees and internally displaced persons.

12. The revision of the UNHCR policy on emergency preparedness and response was completed in 2022, and resulted in the confirmation of key principles, identification of new ways of working and simplification of procedures for emergencies. In parallel, UNHCR began drafting protocols and standard operating procedures for data management, to ensure a consistent and predictable approach to emergencies.

#### **B. Emergency deployments and partnerships**

13. Throughout the year, UNHCR reviewed and enhanced its emergency deployment mechanisms, procedures and management to ensure faster and more effective response to the increasingly complex and concurrent emergencies. In total, UNHCR facilitated some 500 emergency deployments, of which about 300 were in response to the situation in Ukraine and neighbouring countries alone. The remaining emergency deployments were in response to emergencies in a variety of regions and contexts, including those triggered by natural hazards and climate change, such as the aftermath of tropical cyclone Gombe in Mozambique and the drought in the Horn of Africa.

14. As part of UNHCR's commitment to strengthening emergency leadership, a dedicated seven-member emergency surge team and senior emergency staff spent more than 1,800 days on emergency missions in 2022, providing critical support to the countries affected by the Ukraine situation, as well as in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and South Sudan. UNHCR also issued a special call for staff to join the middle-management roster for emergency deployments. Diversity and inclusion, including gender equality, were key considerations for UNHCR when managing emergency rosters and deployments.

15. In 2022, UNHCR continued to strengthen its 20 emergency standby partnerships, and facilitated close to 200 deployments from emergency partners. The value of the service donation from the standby partners was higher in 2022 than in previous years, amounting to over \$12 million. UNHCR also remained actively engaged in the inter-agency Standby Partnership Network, consisting of 15 United Nations organizations and 54 partners, and hosted the standby partnership joint monitoring mission to the Republic of Moldova and Poland in October 2022. UNHCR continued to proactively participate in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Emergency Directors Group and provided support to field missions.

### **C. Supply management**

16. In 2022, UNHCR faced new challenges as a result of the Ukraine crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented energy and oil price increases resulted in higher transportation rates, surcharges, and reduced sea and airfreight capacity. Despite these difficult circumstances, UNHCR successfully dispatched \$37 million worth of emergency core relief items from its seven global emergency stockpiles and regularly replenished global stocks to meet the urgent needs of up to 1 million people.

17. From the onset of the Ukraine emergency, UNHCR worked closely with partners and donors to manage the supply chain to quickly transfer life-saving items. UNHCR expanded various local and global frame agreements and identified \$119 million worth of material assistance to meet urgent needs in the first phase of the response. To ensure a stable and reliable stock of essential supplies, UNHCR established three logistics hubs in Hungary, Poland and Romania as well as 23 new warehouses in the region. Despite the challenging context, UNHCR successfully organized 17 chartered airlifts and multiple road shipments. UNHCR continues to support affected populations with winterization assistance.

18. In line with UNHCR's strategic framework for climate action, UNHCR took major steps to improve the sustainability of its end-to-end supply chain in line with the commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and increase the recycled plastic content of core relief items by 20 per cent by 2025. UNHCR developed greener specifications for four core relief items. In addition, the Office launched a pilot procurement of sustainable core relief items in the Asia and Pacific region to replenish stocks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, including blankets made with 100 per cent recycled plastic and solar lamps with 20 per cent recycled plastic. UNHCR expects that this pilot project should result in lowering the carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 1.840 metric tonnes.

19. As part of its business transformation programme, key design decisions were taken to redefine supply planning, procurement, inventory management and delivery of goods and services within a new enterprise resource planning system (Cloud enterprise resource planning). UNHCR continued to hold webinars to prepare supply staff globally for this transition. In 2022, UNHCR also initiated a comprehensive review of its supply chain operating model, in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of country operations, regional bureaux and Headquarters. This exercise is expected to minimize procurement risks, increase compliance, and lead to better coordination of sourcing and solicitation, consolidated international procurement, and reduced inventory holding in country operations.

## **IV. Risks and challenges**

20. Vulnerable communities are already experiencing reduced resilience, resulting from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-related crises. Natural hazards, such as cyclones and floods, are expected to increase in frequency and magnitude, and to exacerbate conflicts and violence, resulting in situations that risk exceeding UNHCR's response capacity. The ongoing structural interruptions linked to supply, coupled with inflation, product shortages and concurrent emergencies put substantial pressure on displaced populations as well as the organization's supply chain ability to meet the increasing demand.

21. As a result of this challenging operational context, UNHCR anticipates secondary crises, such as increases in negative coping mechanisms, gender-based violence, and new or secondary forced displacement. Overall, the limited resources, combined with escalating needs, will significantly increase the protection and assistance needs of populations of concern.

## **V. Conclusions**

22. The deterioration of humanitarian situations around the world makes it imperative for UNHCR to reflect on and further strengthen its emergency preparedness and response. Through its engagement in addressing the needs of drought-affected populations in the Horn of Africa, UNHCR will deepen its expertise in responding to natural hazard-induced forced displacement. In addition, the global crises provide renewed impetus for capacity development and emergency trainings. To this end, UNHCR will double the number of emergency trainings, in order to increase the number of staff members on the emergency response roster.

23. The increased scale and magnitude of emergencies has highlighted the importance of developing simplified procedures in key areas such as human resources, partnerships and supply. Ensuring faster and better delivery of quality goods and services while reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian assistance remains a priority.

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