

Mr. Ruud Lubbers – UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees. *UNHCR/O. Vogelsang.*

Foreword

BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

The 2002 Global Appeal provides an overview of UNHCR's operations and programmes, outlining our objectives and funding requirements for the coming year.

UNHCR continues to face a multitude of challenges. These include, amongst others, restrictive interpretation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the deteriorating quality of asylum, the high costs and burdens of hosting refugees (especially in protracted refugee situations with no solutions in sight), the perceived abuse of asylum systems and the problem of human trafficking and smuggling.

There is now also a new dimension. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11th September, refugees and asylum-seekers – who were already the objects of considerable mistrust and hostility in many countries – are particularly vulnerable. We need to play an active role in guarding against the rising tide of xenophobia and intolerance.

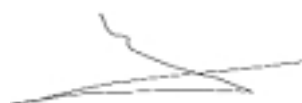
Humanitarian crises in a number of regions continue to place enormous demands on UNHCR. The situation in West Africa and in the Great Lakes region of Africa, which are still affected by unresolved conflict and political instability, are of particular concern. Other areas which will continue to demand our active engagement in 2002 include the Balkans and the Caucasus region, while places such as Colombia and East and West Timor will demand close attention.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis unfolding in and around Afghanistan will remain a priority for UNHCR. Afghans already constitute the largest refugee population in the world, with some 3.5 million in Iran and Pakistan alone. UNHCR is now preparing for new arrivals from Afghanistan in neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran. We are also making contingency plans for a large-scale repatriation of Afghan refugees in the event of a political solution to the current crisis. A separate Addendum to this Appeal will be issued shortly, focusing specifically on the Afghan crisis.

In 2002, I want to focus particular attention on finding solutions. Too many refugees have been languishing for too many years in camps, with few solutions in sight. Voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement – these are the three solutions, and they are the best investment in peace and stability. We will increase our efforts in the coming year to achieve durable solutions for those in protracted refugee situations. But our ability to do so will depend largely on the availability of adequate funding. It will also depend on our ability to forge strong and effective partnerships. The ongoing repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan – many of whom have been in camps for decades – is an important example of what can be achieved.

Due to funding constraints, in 2001 we carried out a thorough review of all our operations. The efforts that we made to ensure greater efficiency are illustrated by the fact that we decreased our budget and staffing significantly, while the number of people of concern to UNHCR remained unchanged. I consider that the budget of USD 828 million for 2002 is the minimum acceptable budget. A failure to achieve this level of funding will certainly have a negative impact on the quality and credibility of our programmes.

I urge our friends and supporters, therefore, to assist in ensuring that the necessary resources are made available so that we can carry out our mandate to provide protection and solutions to refugees and other people of concern. We count on your generosity.



*Ruud Lubbers,
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*