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High Commissioner's Programme**

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**Strategic partnerships, including coordination and
the World Humanitarian Summit**

Summary

This paper reviews key developments in strategic partnerships since the last report (EC/66/SC/CRP.5), made during the sixty-second meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2014. It includes updates on partnerships for solutions and refugee response coordination. It also discusses UNHCR's implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Transformative Agenda, as well as its engagement in the World Humanitarian Summit.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1	3
II. Partnership with non-governmental organizations	2-6	3
III. Partnership for solutions.....	7-9	4
IV. Partnership within the United Nations system and with other international organizations	10-14	4
V. Refugee response coordination	15-17	5
VI. Inter-Agency Standing Committee and cluster responsibilities	18-21	6
VII. World Humanitarian Summit	22-26	6

I. Introduction

1. Partnership is central to UNHCR's ability to deliver on its mandate for international protection and solutions. As outlined below, several key initiatives in 2015 focused on protracted situations and the continued implementation of the Refugee Coordination Model. 2016 is an important year for partnership in view of the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit and related initiatives.

II. Partnership with non-governmental organizations

2. In 2015, of the US\$ 1.2 billion in funds disbursed by UNHCR to partners, nearly 80 per cent went to national or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In total, some 750 NGOs, of which 90 were new partners in 2015, were funded. Sixty-two per cent were national and local organizations. In the same way as international NGOs, local and national NGOs play a prominent role in shaping and implementing UNHCR policies and guidelines, such as the "Policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas,"¹ the "Policy on alternatives to camps,"² the "Global strategy for livelihoods,"³ and operational guidelines related to internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁴

3. UNHCR undertook consultations with stakeholders, including major NGO networks, with a view to reviewing policies and procedures related to the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners.⁵ Over 450 aid workers participated in workshops at the regional and subregional levels, gaining a better understanding of the Enhanced Framework and providing feedback on new or revised policies. A survey on partnership conducted by HIAS highlighted progress on transparency and accountability, and improved perceptions of UNHCR.

4. The Partner Portal,⁶ an innovative web-based platform, was launched in 2015. To date, over 600 NGO partners have registered to gain immediate access to resources relating to partnership, including agreements, disbursements, calls for expressions of interest and partnership policies.

5. Continuing to build on the 2012 High Commissioner's structured dialogue with NGOs, UNHCR has conducted a series of joint missions with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies/InterAction. As of December 2015, six missions – to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan in 2014 and to Chad, Kenya, Lebanon and Myanmar in 2015 – as well as three regional follow-up discussions – West Africa in 2013 and South-east Asia in 2013 and 2015 – were carried out. Discussions have helped to identify areas for improvement, including information sharing, joint planning, joint advocacy for protection, and capacity building, particularly for national NGOs.

6. UNHCR's annual consultations with NGOs continue to provide opportunities for dialogue, the exchange of best practices and networking. The 2015 consultations, which had solutions as an overarching theme, brought together participants from over 270 NGOs, of which some 200 were national NGOs, and a number of other United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations. In total, some 500 people participated, making it the largest annual consultations with NGOs to date. The 2016 consultations will focus on youth, following a series of regional consultations with refugee and local youth.

¹ Available from www.unhcr.org/4ab356ab6.html.

² Available from www.unhcr.org/5422b8f09.html.

³ Available from www.unhcr.org/530f107b6.pdf.

⁴ Available from www.refworld.org/idps.html.

⁵ The Enhanced Framework for Implementation with Partners outlines UNHCR's policies, guidelines and practices for strengthening partnership, delivering quality protection to persons of concern, and supporting accountability for resources entrusted to UNHCR.

⁶ See <https://partner.unhcr.org/>.

III. Partnership for solutions

7. UNHCR works with partners to design comprehensive protection and solutions strategies that address the four dimensions of a solution: legal; economic; civil/political; and social/cultural. This approach recognizes that the progressive attainment or enjoyment of human rights, such as freedom of movement and residence, the right to work, and security of tenure in housing and agricultural land, supports independence and resilience among forcibly displaced, settled and returning populations. This approach also recognizes that refugees can and should be able to contribute to the communities in which they live, providing them with opportunities to be economically active, and to learn and build skills to lead a more dignified life.

8. As of February 2016, UNHCR assumed the role of Chair of the Solutions Alliance. The Alliance brings together host and donor governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, international financial institutions and academic institutions to seek approaches that resolve situations of displacement and prevent new ones from becoming protracted. As part of the Alliance, UNHCR is a member of the Somalia and Zambia national groups and co-chairs the rule of law, as well as research, data and performance management thematic groups. Currently, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania national groups are being established, which doubles the number of national groups. On 9 and 10 February 2016, the Solutions Alliance hosted its annual roundtable in Brussels, Belgium.

9. UNHCR continues to strengthen partnership with development actors to improve coordination on solutions and increase recognition of displacement as a development issue. Four new joint studies with the World Bank – three in Africa and one in the Middle East – are providing regional situation analysis of forced displacement and informing programming priorities. Continued partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supports local integration and self-reliance in Uganda and Zambia. UNHCR's partnerships with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) are promoting the right to work and market development interventions for refugees. Partnerships with private sector entities, such as the IKEA Foundation and UNIQLO, also help drive change and find innovative solutions to the challenges facing refugees.

IV. Partnership within the United Nations system and with other international organizations

10. In 2015, UNHCR and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) updated guidance on country-level letters of understanding to strengthen their partnership in the field and provide consistent support to populations of concern in the technical areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, health and nutrition, and child protection. In 2015, letters of understanding were signed in South Sudan and Sudan.

11. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNHCR intensified their collaboration in several areas, including tuberculosis, non-communicable diseases in humanitarian settings, and health systems responding to the influx of refugees and migrants in Europe. The work on non-communicable diseases in humanitarian emergencies will gain momentum in the coming years with the increased evidence base and improved guidance.

12. The World Food Programme (WFP) remains one of UNHCR's most important operational partners. In October 2015, WFP and UNHCR, with UNICEF, committed to strengthening cooperation on cash-based interventions.

13. 2015 was a critical year for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), of which UNHCR is a co-sponsor. The new UNAIDS strategy “Fast-tracking to zero”⁷ outlines the measures to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. During the thirty-sixth UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board held in July 2015, UNHCR and WFP, together with UNAIDS, highlighted the risks associated with neglecting HIV in funding and programming decisions.

14. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed joint approaches to mixed movements, ranging from inter-agency response plans in Yemen and Europe, to joint responses to rescue at sea. Forms of collaboration included Mixed Migration Task Forces, joint strategies to address human trafficking, and joint advocacy on refugees and migrants, notably when the SDGs were being developed.

V. Refugee response coordination

15. In 2015 and early 2016, UNHCR continued to implement the Refugee Coordination Model and, where applicable, the “Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations,”⁸ which provides a framework for leadership and coordination in both refugee operations and complex humanitarian emergencies. Implementation has included the development of technical guidance and capacity building, as well as the provision of field support. In response to UNHCR’s offer to use the existing refugee coordination platform for the IDP response in Maroua in northern Cameroon, an inter-agency mission in April 2015 sought to identify appropriate coordination arrangements for humanitarian actors on the ground. Subsequently, the High Commissioner and Emergency Relief Coordinator agreed that existing refugee coordination mechanisms in Cameroon may be used for the internal displacement situation, while maintaining respective accountabilities and reporting lines. In April 2015, a joint mission to Chad also supported the implementation of the “Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations,” and additional ones are planned. To strengthen the coordination of refugee responses, UNHCR staff undertook missions to Chad, Croatia, Greece, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United Republic Tanzania.

16. Consistent with the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR extended the terms of the Regional Refugee Coordinators responsible for leading operational planning and resource mobilization for the Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria situations. The Office also designated new Coordinators for the Yemen and Europe situations and issued administrative instructions enhancing the involvement of partners in the development of country operation plans. At present, seven Regional Refugee Response Plans cover 30 countries, involving over 270 partners. Most recently, the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe was launched in Geneva in January 2016.

17. Where applicable, UNHCR has worked with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other stakeholders to ensure that refugee response appears as a distinct chapter in inter-agency country-level humanitarian response plans. In line with the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR remains committed to ensuring that the coordination, planning and delivery of refugee responses are effective, collaborative and based on principles of partnership.

⁷ Available from

http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC2686_WAD2014report_en.pdf.

⁸ Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/53679e679.pdf>.

VI. Inter-Agency Standing Committee and cluster responsibilities

18. UNHCR continued to implement the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Transformative Agenda, working within the framework of the established coordination arrangements at the global and field levels.

19. In follow-up to a whole-of-system review, the global protection cluster, which UNHCR leads, began developing a comprehensive policy framework on protection with a view to strengthening the response of IASC members to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. In February 2016, the global protection cluster updated its "Strategic Framework for 2016-2019"⁹ in order to promote the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, develop policy standards and provide support to staff in the field. Out of 28 field protection clusters worldwide, UNHCR leads 22. The Office also co-facilitates several clusters with NGOs and co-leads clusters with the Governments of the Philippines and Somalia.

20. UNHCR and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) co-lead the global shelter cluster, which supported 25 country-level clusters in 2015, reaching 16.2 million persons in need of shelter or non-food items. UNHCR led 11 out of these 25 country-level shelter clusters. In Afghanistan, Chad and Mali, UNHCR shared the responsibility of facilitating country-level clusters with IOM. It also did so with the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) in Central African Republic. In the course of 2015, UNHCR's global shelter cluster support team provided support to country-level shelter clusters through 10 field missions to 9 countries. A 2015 global shelter cluster survey found an 80 per cent satisfaction rate among shelter actors for support provided by the global cluster.¹⁰

21. The global camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster, which is co-led by UNHCR and IOM, supports 37 field-level clusters worldwide. The CCCM cluster manages and develops tools and technical guidance, information management systems, and training materials for use in the field. Inter-agency rapid response teams and technical experts provide surge capacity and field support.

VII. World Humanitarian Summit

22. The United Nations Secretary-General has called for the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit to be organized in Istanbul on 23 and 24 May 2016. The objectives of the Summit are three-fold: to reinvigorate the commitment of the international community to humanity and the universality of humanitarian principles by placing affected people at the centre of humanitarian action and political decision-making; to agree on a set of actions and commitments to enable countries and communities to better prepare for and respond to crises, as well as be more resilient to shocks; and to offer a platform to share knowledge and best practices.

23. From the outset, UNHCR has been actively involved in thematic and regional consultations and has focused on a key set of messages, including: the need to move towards a humanitarian system that is more inclusive; the need to bridge the humanitarian-development divide; and the need to reform humanitarian financing to meet the needs of increasing numbers of people. UNHCR has also focused on the search for solutions for

⁹ Available from http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/about_us/GPC_strategy/gpcstrategicframework.pdf.

¹⁰ For an overview of the 2015 global shelter cluster survey findings, see http://sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/global_shelter_cluster_meeting_2015_pre-meeting_survey_results.pdf.

refugees in protracted situations and the role of innovation in improving delivery and gaining efficiencies for the benefit of refugees and other persons of concern.

24. The World Humanitarian Summit presents a unique opportunity to examine the approaches to displacement that have guided policy and operations to date. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to reach the furthest behind first, provides a framework to help overcome the humanitarian-development divide. UNHCR is engaged in several areas in the lead-up to the Summit, which include the following:

- **Shared responsibility for addressing large-scale refugee movements.** In November 2015, the United Nations Secretary-General set out a roadmap to respond to humanitarian concerns resulting from the onward movement of refugees and the increasing pressure on host countries. With a view to addressing the Syrian refugee crisis, the Secretary-General requested that UNHCR convene a ministerial-level meeting to garner further support for refugees as well as host countries through pledges for resettlement and other forms of admission of Syrian refugees. The high-level meeting will take place in Geneva on 30 March 2016. The outcomes of this meeting will be presented at the World Humanitarian Summit, which will in turn feed into the high-level plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, scheduled on 19 September 2016.
- **New ways to manage protracted refugee situations.** While humanitarian assistance aims to address immediate life-saving needs, the majority of displacement crises today last for years and require longer-term strategies. Building on the Solutions Alliance annual roundtable in February 2016, the World Bank Group, UNHCR and the Government of the United Kingdom will convene a forum in April 2016 to examine new approaches to protracted forced displacement. The forum will bring together governments hosting large numbers of forcibly displaced persons, donor governments, humanitarian and development agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, and will seek to build consensus on new approaches and explore how these can be operationalized. The main focus will be on refugees, particularly those hosted by low- and middle-income countries. In addition, the Government of Japan is supporting the collaboration between UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on joint programmes and implementation to develop best practices and synergies between humanitarian and development actors, and the outcomes will be presented at the World Humanitarian Summit, alongside the work of the Solutions Alliance.
- **The centrality of protection in humanitarian action.** UNHCR continues to promote placing people at the centre of humanitarian action. As part of this effort, UNHCR emphasizes the importance of saving lives, ensuring safety and security, alleviating suffering, and restoring the dignity of affected communities. At the World Humanitarian Summit, UNHCR and its partners will promote the development of a “protection package” to enhance the impact and effectiveness of the humanitarian system. The five components of the “protection package” will be: i) the centrality of protection; ii) accountability of humanitarian leadership; iii) capacity building; iv) funding; and v) protection and innovation.
- **Innovation in humanitarian action.** Innovation at UNHCR is undertaken as part of an interdepartmental initiative, which fosters creative problem solving, tests new methods and supports partnerships, particularly in response to challenges at field level. At the World Humanitarian Summit, UNHCR, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other partners, will promote the establishment of a Global Humanitarian Lab¹¹ to invest in research and development and test innovative solutions.

¹¹ A public-private partnership involving governments, academia and the private-sector, the Global Humanitarian Lab will be a small, action-oriented entity with global outreach.

- **Towards a “Grand Bargain” on humanitarian financing.** The report of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing launched in January 2016 responds to the ever-widening gap between the increasing humanitarian needs and the resources available to address them. The “Grand Bargain,” which is proposed in the report, advocates for more efficient, transparent and effective humanitarian financing. It calls for greater flexibility in funding and for harmonized reporting requirements among the donor community. The “Grand Bargain” also calls for common needs assessments among humanitarian organizations, to pool existing expertise and reduce duplicate assessments. UNHCR will engage in discussions on the “Grand Bargain” prior to the Summit.

25. In addition, UNHCR is actively supporting, among others, initiatives on the eradication of statelessness, education in emergencies, persons with disabilities, cash-based programming, and engagement with faith-based organizations.

26. The consultation process leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit has drawn from the insights of a wide range of stakeholders, including affected persons. UNHCR believes that follow-up to the Summit will be all the more important in order to ensure that concrete steps are taken to improve humanitarian action globally.
