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Update of UNHCR's operations in Asia and the Pacific**A. Situational context including new developments**

As of the end of 2017, there were some 9.5 million persons of concern to UNHCR in the Asia and Pacific region, including 4.2 refugees, 2.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 2.2 million stateless persons. While only 20 of the 45 countries and territories in the region have acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the long-standing tradition of hospitality towards refugees remains strong, as demonstrated by Bangladesh over the last 13 months in welcoming 725,000 stateless Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar following the violence that erupted in the northern Rakhine State in late August 2017.

A major operational focus for UNHCR in 2018 has remained the refugee emergency in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. UNHCR has supported the Government in providing protection and delivering lifesaving assistance to some 900,000 stateless Rohingya refugees, including an estimated 200,000 who fled Rakhine State in previous waves of displacement. In June 2018, the monsoon season in Bangladesh left refugees vulnerable to landslides, flooding and disease. The Bangladeshi authorities, UNHCR, IOM and other partners worked to mitigate the risks and responded with emergency interventions, including search and rescue operations, relocations and the distribution of shelter kits and additional aid. More than one year after the current crisis began, Rohingya refugees continue to flee to Bangladesh, although in smaller numbers than in 2017. Since January 2018, over 13,000 Rohingya refugees have crossed into Bangladesh. The situation remains grim, and there are growing concerns about the future of an entire generation of Rohingya children.

In April 2018, UNHCR and Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding, which establishes a framework for cooperation on the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Rohingya refugees, in line with international standards, once conditions in Myanmar are conducive.

In June 2018, UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Myanmar signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding which establishes a framework for cooperation aimed at creating the conditions conducive for the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable repatriation of Rohingya refugees to their places of origin or of their choosing. Since the conditions are not yet conducive to voluntary return, the memorandum of understanding represents only a first, but necessary, step to support the Government's efforts to this end.

In view of the enormous scale and diversity of the challenges facing the people of Rakhine State and the urgent need to find solutions, UNHCR is promoting the concept of "A Solidarity approach for the people of Rakhine State". The approach plans to bring together a broad range of stakeholders in support of resilience, solutions and a decent life for the people of Rakhine State, wherever they may be.

Afghans remained the largest refugee population of concern to UNHCR in Asia and the Pacific. In total there were 2.2 million Afghan refugees worldwide in 2018, the majority of whom were hosted in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan. Nearly forty years since the start of the large-scale displacement of Afghans, the volatile security situation in Afghanistan continues to drive displacement in 2018, with over 175,800 persons estimated

to be newly displaced within the country. It has also rendered humanitarian access increasingly difficult.

UNHCR continues to monitor the protection situation facing refugees who were transferred to Papua New Guinea and Nauru under Australia's policy of "offshore processing." Five years on, some 1,350 men, women and children still live in detention-like conditions, with many (including young children) suffering from acute mental illness. While UNHCR welcomes the ongoing relocation of refugees to the United States of America, it calls for urgent solutions to be secured for the hundreds who will remain, including those who were transferred to Australia for medical reasons and who are expected to return to Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

B. Progress and challenges in achieving the global strategic priorities

Safeguarding access to protection and asylum

UNHCR promoted protection-sensitive systems for the management of mixed movements in the region in 2018. The Office also continued to undertake refugee status determination in countries without national asylum procedures.

The extension of the "Solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries" (SSAR) for 2018-2019 was approved by the Government of Pakistan through an inter-ministerial meeting in May 2018. The Government continues to extend the validity of proof of registration cards, albeit for shorter periods, with the latest extension given until 30 September 2018. The Government of Pakistan's programme to register undocumented Afghans was completed in February 2018. As of August, out of some 879,200 individuals registered, more than 327,600 individuals have received their Afghan citizen cards (ACCs). The validity of the ACCs has also been extended until 30 September 2018. The ACC does not confer refugee status but does regularize temporary stay in Pakistan. Furthermore, all categories of Afghans in need of protection continue to have unimpeded access to UNHCR and its partners.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to extend protection and assistance to a protracted refugee population of close to 1 million Afghan and Iraqi refugees. In addition, the Government has taken steps to regularize the large undocumented Afghan population residing within its borders and continues to implement inclusive social protection policies that facilitate access for all Afghan children to school and for all refugees to enrol in the national universal public health insurance scheme.

In Central Asia, as part of ongoing efforts to safeguard access to asylum procedures, UNHCR, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), continues to support the Chair of the Almaty Process and to collaborate with other organizations and initiatives that engage border officials from the five Central Asian countries to strengthen border management systems.

UNHCR continues to explore complementary pathways of admission for refugees to third countries as part of its comprehensive solutions strategy. In Japan, the Office is supporting scholarship programmes sponsored by the Japanese Government that have enabled Syrian refugees to begin post-graduate studies.

Over the past year, protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers in India, which continues to be a generous host State, has been under pressure. A Government advisory issued in August of 2017 aimed at greater scrutiny over illegal migration has resulted in reduced freedom of movement and access to services for persons of concern to UNHCR, including Rohingya refugees.

Within the span of a few months earlier this year, more than 500 Yemeni asylum-seekers arrived on South Korea's Jeju Island. UNHCR commends the South Korean authorities and the people of Jeju for their efforts to assist the Yemenis who fled one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. UNHCR has provided technical advice and background information to the authorities in support of the Government's efforts to receive and consider the asylum requests.

Seeking solutions for protracted refugee situations

In July 2018, the Afghan Government officially announced its decision to join and support the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF). Afghanistan's commitment to apply the CRRF provides an opportunity to showcase and further build on good practices as a country of origin, based on the experience gained in implementing the SSAR, especially with regards to the inclusion of returnees in Afghanistan's national policies and priorities. The application of the CRRF in Afghanistan will complement the SSAR.

Last year, more than 1,500 Sri Lankan refugees returned home, the largest number of returnees in five years, and returns in 2018 are on track to exceed last year's mark. UNHCR is working closely with the Sri Lankan and Indian authorities to enhance opportunities for return.

To date, more than 113,000 Bhutanese refugees have been resettled to eight resettlement countries, with 85 per cent having gone to the United States of America. By the end of the year, the resettlement programme will come to a close, with an estimated 6,500 refugees remaining in Damak, Nepal. UNHCR continues to work with all stakeholders to ensure durable and dignified solutions are found for all who remain.

UNHCR submitted nearly 3,500 refugees from around the world for resettlement to Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea and Japan. In addition, last year, the Republic of Korea completed a three-year pilot resettlement programme, providing 86 refugees from Myanmar who were living in Thailand with a durable solution. Since then, the Government has decided to continue offering resettlement to Myanmar refugees identified by UNHCR in Malaysia.

Ensuring protection and solutions for internally displaced persons

By mid-2018, there was an estimated 1.9 million IDPs in Afghanistan, over 175,800 of whom were newly displaced between 1 January and mid-August 2018. UNHCR and partners have conducted protection monitoring missions focused on the Baghdis, Farah, Ghor and Herat provinces. In 2018, UNHCR provided emergency kits of non-food items to displaced individuals.

In Pakistan, as of 31 July 2018, more than 176,700 individuals were registered as internally displaced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Between 1 January and 31 July 2018, some 1,370 individuals returned to areas declared safe for return after military operations. UNHCR has supported the IDP returns through protection monitoring and the provision of targeted assistance to vulnerable individuals.

In Myanmar, the office continued to work with partners and the Government to protect and assist approximately 107,000 IDPs in Kachin and northern Shan States. A sharp increase in armed conflict in Kachin State earlier in 2018 led to an alarming rise in the number of newly displaced persons, with 8,000 people estimated to have fled. In central Rakhine State, there remain an estimated 128,000 IDPs, for whom UNHCR continues to urge the Government to develop a plan for the closure of the IDP camps in line with international human rights standards.

Reducing and preventing statelessness and protecting stateless persons

In 2018, States in the region continued to take concrete steps to prevent and reduce statelessness, with support from UNHCR and civil society. The Office remains determined to strengthen its engagement with States and other partners in 2018 to achieve the goals of its "#IBelong campaign to end statelessness by 2024" and to build on the region's related successes.

In Myanmar, UNHCR has called on the Government to address the root causes of displacement of the Rohingya, including by guaranteeing their security in Rakhine State, ensuring that they can meaningfully enjoy their basic human rights and, ultimately, providing a pathway to citizenship. As a direct result of their statelessness, the Rohingya in Myanmar suffer entrenched discrimination, marginalization and the denial of a wide range of basic human rights, resulting in successive waves of displacement.

The Thai Government provided nationality to more than 110,000 stateless persons between 2008 and mid-2018. UNHCR is working closely with the Government to speed up the process of processing nationality applications for over 470,000 registered stateless persons in the country.

In the Philippines, over 6,770 people have had their nationality conferred through an ongoing tripartite registration and nationality confirmation exercise conducted by the Governments of Indonesia and the Philippines, with the support of UNHCR. In 2018, it is expected that the remaining 1,770 persons registered under this project will have their nationality confirmed.

In Malaysia, the new Government pledged to resolve stateless issues among the Indian community as well as to reduce the hurdles in registering children born in Malaysia. In May 2018, the Government set up a taskforce under the leadership of the Prime Minister to address the situation of minorities, including among the stateless Indian-Tamils.

UNHCR is collaborating with United Nations agencies and civil society to monitor developments in Assam State, India, where some 4 million individuals were initially excluded from the draft National Register of Citizens published on 30 July.

In Central Asia, 5,800 individuals had their statelessness situation resolved in the first half of 2018, bringing the total number of people who have found a solution since 2014 to 46,700. The naturalization of 3,750 stateless persons by Tajikistan and 700 persons by the Kyrgyz Republic in the first half of 2018 demonstrates important momentum in this regard. In addition, all five countries in Central Asia reaffirmed their willingness to work towards the reduction and prevention of childhood statelessness at a regional conference on the right to legal identity and prevention of statelessness convened with support from UNHCR in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in June 2018 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

In South East-Asia, UNHCR is partnering with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) on a research project on promoting the right to a nationality for women and children. In cooperation with the Government of Viet Nam, the ACWC is implementing the project as part of its 2016-2020 work plan. A consultant has been identified to compile research findings received from the 10 ASEAN countries in readiness for discussions at a Members' Conference later in the year.

UNHCR is collaborating with the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process and ESCAP on civil registration and vital statistics, including the piloting of a jointly prepared civil registration assessment toolkit to support civil registration (births, deaths and marriages) for refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality. UNHCR is also at an advanced stage in negotiations with the Stateless Network for Asia and Pacific for enhanced collaboration and engagement in stateless operations in the region.

C. Financial information

The revised budget approved by the Executive Committee in October 2017 for the Asia and Pacific region for 2018 was \$492.3 million. It has increased by \$208.7 million, due to the supplementary budget for the emergency response for the large-scale refugee influx in Bangladesh and extended engagement in the IDP situation in the Philippines, and now stands at \$700.9 million as of the end of August. Funding for future years remains uncertain as a number of key donors have redirected funds to emerging crises outside the region. Foreign aid budgets have also been reduced in several countries in response to domestic developments. As it is unlikely that these trends will reverse in the near future, UNHCR has undertaken a number of prioritization exercises and will continue to focus on innovative ways to engage with States and other partners to deliver protection and assistance to persons of concern. As of the end of August 2018, voluntary contributions earmarked for UNHCR's operations in Asia and the Pacific amounted to \$203.3 million, representing about 29 per cent of the needs in the region.