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High Commissioner's Programme**

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**Update on coordination issues: strategic
partnerships**

Summary

This paper reviews the progress made on coordination issues and the development of strategic partnerships since the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2014. It includes updates on strategic partnerships with non-governmental organizations, and leadership and coordination in emergencies involving both internally displaced persons and refugees. It also discusses strategic partnerships in the areas of solutions and statelessness.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
<i>Chapters</i>		
I. Introduction.....	1-3	3
II. Partnerships in humanitarian response.....	4-22	3
A. Refugee coordination and accountabilities in mixed situations.....	4-9	3
B. IASC and cluster responsibilities.....	10-14	4
C. UNHCR-NGO partnerships.....	15-17	5
D. Partnerships in the United Nations and with other international organizations	18-22	5
III. Partnerships for solutions.....	23-25	6
IV. Partnerships in the area of statelessness.....	26-27	7

I. Introduction

1. Over the past year several new crises erupted, while old conflicts continued to fester. In the second half of 2014, the international humanitarian system responded to four simultaneous level-3 emergencies as a result of the crises in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. During the year, over 5.5 million people were displaced by events in these four countries alone. With every new emergency and every new wave of refugees, the pressure on the humanitarian response system builds.

2. In this environment, where response capacities and funding are stretched to the limits, strong, inclusive and predictable coordination is needed to ensure that humanitarian operations are streamlined, complementary and mutually reinforcing. In order to achieve this, UNHCR has continued to refine its refugee coordination model and implement the *UNHCR/OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice* (April 2014)¹.

3. Efforts are also underway to strengthen the application of partnership principles, enhance existing partnerships and proactively seek new forms of partnership to help further implement UNHCR's strategic directions.

II. Partnerships in humanitarian response

A. Refugee coordination and accountabilities in mixed situations

4. UNHCR continued to roll out and implement the refugee coordination model and *Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations*, which provide the framework for leadership and coordination in both refugee operations and situations where a complex humanitarian emergency is taking place. By clarifying roles and responsibilities, the refugee coordination model makes UNHCR's approach to coordination more predictable, inclusive and partner-friendly, and helps ensure that refugees and other populations of concern receive the assistance and protection they need. By rearticulating UNHCR's role in the context of the current inter-agency operating environment, it reaffirms the integrity of the High Commissioner's mandate and accountability for refugee leadership. UNHCR's refugee response is an integral yet distinct element in the overall humanitarian coordination architecture.

5. The roll-out strategy for the refugee coordination model and the Joint Note includes the development of technical guidance, capacity-building and support to the field to enhance operationalization. Inter-agency and inter-divisional roll-out missions have taken place to support operationalization in Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Pakistan and Uganda. Training on refugee response coordination has been integrated in capacity-building programmes for senior management and other staff. Technical guidance has been included in the new digital version of UNHCR's Emergency Handbook, which will be released in the first half of 2015. The refugee coordination model and the Joint Note have also been incorporated in the administrative instructions issued for resource mobilization, planning and budgeting for operations.

6. In support of the refugee coordination model, the High Commissioner designated four Regional Refugee Coordinators for the Central African Republic, Sudan, Syria and, most recently, Nigeria situations. They are leading operational planning and resource

¹ Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/538dd3da6.html>.

mobilization plans within the refugee coordination model framework. Regional refugee response plans, along with their respective country response plans, provide UNHCR and partners with a common platform for planning, delivery and fundraising.

7. In line with the Joint Note, UNHCR worked with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other stakeholders to include the refugee response as a distinct chapter in the inter-agency country-level strategic response plans. The *Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 in Response to the Syria Crisis* (3RP), which aims to scale up resilience and stabilization-based development to complement humanitarian assistance, reflects efforts to enhance collaboration with development actors to improve assistance to refugees and host communities.

8. Through the implementation of the refugee coordination model and the Joint Note, UNHCR is strengthening partnerships to enhance refugee emergency response. Deployment schemes through standby partners and bilateral partnership agreements with emergency response organizations are also contributing to these efforts.

9. Information management remains a vital tool for coordination and partnership in both refugee and internal displacement situations. There are currently some 60 UNHCR staff around the world who are dedicated to information management. Standardized operational reporting templates, a framework for protection information management and a standard needs assessment process have been introduced globally in support of the refugee coordination model. To improve the quality of programming in key areas such as cash, livelihoods and self-reliance, UNHCR is exploring how to standardize innovative statistical techniques, working with partners such as the World Bank and national statistical offices.

B. IASC and cluster responsibilities

10. UNHCR continued to implement the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Transformative Agenda, primarily through its engagement in system-wide level-3 emergencies. The global protection cluster, led by UNHCR, convened an inter-agency task team to implement actions under the IASC's "protection in humanitarian action" strategic priority for 2014-2016, ensuring coherence with the IASC principals' statement on the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. Among these actions is an independent whole-of-system review of protection in humanitarian crises, which is currently underway.

11. UNHCR continues to work within the framework of the established partnership and co-ordination arrangements at the global and field levels in the clusters of protection, shelter, and camp coordination and camp management. It is also a member of the strategic advisory groups for the global water, sanitation and hygiene cluster and the global health cluster.

12. The Office now leads 21 field protection clusters worldwide, co-facilitates protection clusters with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in several countries,² and co-leads protection clusters with governments in several locations, such as the Philippines and Somalia. UNHCR currently co-leads with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) the protection cluster in Ukraine. At the global level, a strategic advisory group on protection comprises NGOs and United Nations agencies.

² UNHCR co-facilitates protection clusters with the Danish Refugee Council in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia; the Norwegian Refugee Council in Afghanistan, Colombia and South Sudan; and the International Rescue Committee in Pakistan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

13. At present, UNHCR leads 11 of the 24 country-level shelter clusters, the newest being the shelter/non-food item cluster in Ukraine. Co-facilitation arrangements are in place with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan, Chad and Mali; and with ACTED in the Central African Republic. The 2013-2017 global shelter cluster strategy provides a joint vision for more than 30 partners that are active at the global level, under the leadership of UNHCR and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

14. The global camp coordination and camp management cluster co-led by UNHCR and IOM, currently supports some 19 field operations globally. An inter-agency rapid response team has been in place since 2013.

C. UNHCR-NGO partnerships

15. UNHCR works closely with an array of partners, including nearly 720 NGOs. Of these, almost 75 per cent are national or local NGOs.

16. In 2014, of the US\$ 1.35 billion in funds disbursed by UNHCR to partners to implement various programmes, 70 per cent went to NGOs. UNHCR has undertaken a consultative process in implementing its *Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners* aimed at strengthening partnerships, operational performance and accountability. Several workshops and meetings were held with a wide spectrum of NGO partners in order to consider their perspectives and partnership interests. In collaboration with the International Medical Corps, UNHCR also undertook a project to strengthen the capacities for emergency preparedness of 11 national NGOs.

17. UNHCR continues to invest in bilateral partnerships with major international NGO partners, exploring further complementarities in expertise and resources in various settings, revising global memoranda of understanding (MOUs) in some cases, and supporting regular strategic consultations. In follow-up to the High Commissioner's structured dialogue with NGOs, a joint partnership mission to Kenya was undertaken with InterAction in January 2015.

D. Partnerships in the United Nations and with other international organizations

18. UNHCR has been actively engaged in the process leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit, which will be held in Istanbul in May 2016. The Office participates in the work of the thematic groups ("transformation through innovation" and "serving the needs of people in conflict") and the regional steering groups, and seeks the views of displaced people through stakeholder consultations. The High Commissioner will address the regional consultation in the Middle East and North Africa region (2-5 March) and the Deputy High Commissioner spoke at the "Europe and others group" regional consultation in early February. In its interventions, UNHCR has stressed the need to: make protection central to humanitarian response; engage and empower affected populations; pursue concrete actions to strengthen the accountability of humanitarian actors to affected populations; focus on solutions to protracted displacement crises by strengthening the collaboration of development and humanitarian actors; strategically invest in innovation to develop tools and projects that respond more effectively to current and new challenges; and address the growing gap between needs and available resources by rethinking today's financing mechanisms.

19. The Office continues to explore partnerships with the private sector, including through the Solutions Alliance’s thematic group on “Engaging the Private Sector in Finding Solutions for Displacement”³ and with the Geneva-based International Trade Centre in support of the *Global Livelihoods Strategy*.

20. The World Food Programme (WFP) remains one of UNHCR’s most important operational partners. In late September 2014, a high-level meeting between both agencies was held to discuss practicalities in relation to the refugee coordination model and the *Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations*. Building on recent experience, revised guidance for country-level collaboration between the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR in refugee operations was issued by the two organizations in January 2015.

21. On the occasion of the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Protection at Sea (10-11 December 2014) UNHCR, together with the International Maritime Organization, IOM, OHCHR and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) issued a *Joint Statement on Protection at Sea in the Twenty-First Century*. Alongside the outcomes of the Dialogue, it will form the basis for reinforced inter-agency cooperation on the range of challenges associated with protection at sea.

22. Efforts are currently underway at the level of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to ensure that all newly-issued Convention travel documents for refugees and stateless persons are machine-readable. This process is the result of close cooperation with the ICAO and advocacy by UNHCR and a number of States. In 2015, UNHCR is the chair of the Inter-agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT).

III. Partnerships for solutions

23. Where durable solutions are not yet possible, UNHCR builds relationships with partners to achieve interim goals that support durable solutions in the long-term. 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 displaced, settled and returning populations.

24. UNHCR continues to strengthen partnerships with development actors to improve coordination on durable solutions and to increase recognition of displacement as a development issue, including through joint studies with the World Bank on the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, and through partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) focused on self-reliance in Uganda. National groups have been established to look at the Somali refugee situation and to address the needs of the remaining Angolan population in Zambia. UNHCR is supporting the Joint IDP Profiling Service⁴ in the development of indicators to measure progress on achieving durable solutions for internally displaced persons.

25. UNHCR, in partnership with relevant humanitarian actors, has been actively engaged in the post-2015 sustainable development process. The Office advocates that support for displaced persons is critical to sustainable development. This has been recognized in the Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable

³ See <http://www.endingdisplacement.org/engaging-the-private-sector-in-finding-solutions-for-displacement/>.

⁴ See <http://www.jips.org/en/home>.

development agenda entitled, “The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet” (A/69/700).

IV. Partnerships in the area of statelessness

26. To resolve protracted situations of statelessness, UNHCR is increasingly investing in initiatives that are jointly implemented with governments and NGOs. In 2014, thousands of stateless persons or persons of undetermined nationality in Central Asia and Malaysia acquired a nationality or had their nationality confirmed with support of such joint initiatives, and the foundations were laid to resolve the statelessness situations of thousands more in the future.

27. New partnership opportunities are also being explored in the implementation of *UNHCR’s Global Action Plan to End Statelessness*⁵. The Global Action Plan involves a wide range of actors, including United Nations agencies, international and regional organizations and civil society groups. UNHCR’s partnership with the Norwegian Refugees Council will be expanded to include work to address statelessness in the context of forced displacement. UNHCR is also working with the World Council of Churches to provide training and engage member churches in this issue.

⁵ See <http://www.unhcr.org/54621bf49.html>.