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**Strategic partnerships, including coordination**

*Summary*

This paper reviews key developments in strategic partnerships since the last report (EC/67/SC/CRP.6) to the sixty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2016. 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 and the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants.

## Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	1-2	3
II. United Nations summit for refugees and migrants .....	3-5	3
III. World Humanitarian Summit .....	6-9	3
IV. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations.....	10-14	4
V. Partnerships for solutions .....	15-19	5
VI. Partnerships within the United Nations system and with other international organizations .....	20-25	5
VII. Refugee response coordination .....	26-28	6
VIII. Inter-Agency Standing Committee and cluster responsibilities.....	29-33	7

## I. Introduction

1. Partnerships remain central to UNHCR's ability to deliver on its mandate for international protection and solutions. The engagement of a broad range of actors, including those not traditionally engaged in the humanitarian sphere, is critical to mobilizing an effective response to displacement and to meeting the vast needs of a growing refugee population. In implementing the High Commissioner's strategic directions<sup>1</sup> for the organization over the next five years, UNHCR will give priority to extending and strengthening partnerships in ways that make the most effective use of available resources and expertise, drawing on complementarities.

2. In 2016, several key initiatives contributed to establishing and strengthening synergies with traditional and non-traditional partners, such as the World Humanitarian Summit, the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, and the United States Leaders' Summit on Refugees.

## II. United Nations summit for refugees and migrants

3. In 2016, UNHCR engaged with the United Nations Secretariat, partners, civil society and Member States to prepare for the summit on refugees and migrants, which took place in September. This included contributions to the Secretary-General's report, "In safety and dignity: Addressing large movements of refugees and migrants" and support to the co-facilitators of the deliberations that culminated in the adoption of the "New York declaration for refugees and migrants" by all 193 Member States.

4. The New York declaration contains an extensive set of commitments to enhance the rights and well-being of both refugees and migrants. With respect to refugees, UNHCR was called upon to articulate a comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) to be applied to large movements of refugees, including in protracted situations. Lessons learned from applying the CRRF will inform a global compact on refugees, to be proposed to the General Assembly by the High Commissioner in 2018.

5. UNHCR has since embarked on broad consultations with Member States, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, civil society, academia and others on the CRRF, which is now being rolled out in several countries. In addition, UNHCR closely follows the negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

## III. World Humanitarian Summit

6. UNHCR took part in the World Humanitarian Summit, convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in Istanbul in May 2016, including participation in regional consultations and thematic discussions. The Office focussed its interventions on the following areas covered at the summit: the need to move towards a more inclusive humanitarian system; the centrality of protection in humanitarian action; efforts to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus; the need to reform humanitarian financing, in particular for finding solutions for refugees in protracted situations; and the role of innovation in improving delivery and gaining efficiencies.

7. In addition to subscribing to the five core responsibilities of the "Agenda for humanity", UNHCR made 33 individual commitments and joined several initiatives<sup>2</sup>. Among these, UNHCR committed to steer inter-agency efforts to place protection at the

<sup>1</sup> Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/5894558d4.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR commitments are available from: <http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/explore-commitments/indv-commitments/?combine=UNHCR#search>.

centre of humanitarian action, to ensure predictable engagement in situations of internal displacement, and to champion efforts to end statelessness.

8. In line with its commitment to the “grand bargain”, agreed upon by key donors and humanitarian organizations at the summit, UNHCR will bring about internal changes to improve effectiveness, efficiencies, transparency and accountability. Together with the Government of Japan, UNHCR is facilitating efforts to gain collective efficiencies, through reduction of management costs. For humanitarian agencies, this includes joint procurement and an initiative with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to harmonize and simplify partnership agreements, while donors are expected to reduce individual assessments, evaluations and oversight processes. Since the summit, UNHCR has instructed the relevant sections responsible for implementing the grand bargain commitments to put in place work plans for achieving them by 2020.

9. Through the “Agenda for humanity” platform, UNHCR will report on an annual basis on the progress made toward achieving its commitments.

#### **IV. Partnership with non-governmental organizations**

10. In 2016, UNHCR disbursed US\$ 1.4 billion<sup>3</sup> to 837 partners, including nearly US\$ 1.1 billion to 673 national or international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), representing an increase of about US\$ 165 million compared to last year. Of this amount, some US\$ 614 million was provided to local partners, including US\$ 432 million to national NGOs.

11. UNHCR involved relevant stakeholders, including large NGO networks, in the rollout of new policies and procedures related to the “Enhanced framework for implementing with partners”<sup>4</sup>. Workshops on improving the use of resources and audits were organized to strengthen accountability and the sound stewardship of resources entrusted to UNHCR and partners.

12. UNHCR continued to engage with partners in the development of the common United Nations partner portal<sup>5</sup>, standardized due diligence partner assessments, a harmonized partnership agreement template, simplified reporting and joint audits.

13. Building on the 2012 High Commissioner’s structured dialogue with NGOs, during 2016 UNHCR undertook joint field missions with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and InterAction to Greece, El Salvador and the United Republic of Tanzania, bringing the total number of joint field missions conducted to nine. ICVA and InterAction conducted an evaluation of the structured dialogue, concluding that while this was a useful platform for improving the quality of partnership between NGOs and UNHCR, its impact was too limited as a stand-alone initiative. The New York declaration, however, provided the opportunity to strengthen partnerships with NGOs on protection and solutions, as well as in the context of strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus.

14. UNHCR’s annual consultations with NGOs continued to provide opportunities for dialogue, the exchange of best practices and global networking. The 2016 consultations focused on youth, following the global refugee youth consultations. Thirty refugee and stateless youth participated in the consultations, providing direct input in the discussions. The consultations brought together 520 participants from 125 international and 185 national NGOs, as well as a number of other United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations. The 2017 NGO consultations will focus on the CRRF.

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<sup>3</sup> These figures, as of 19 January 2017, are provisional, as the closure of the 2016 accounts is still in progress.

<sup>4</sup> The “Enhanced framework for implementing 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.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://partner.unhcr.org/>.

## V. Partnership for solutions

15. Solutions are achieved when a person of concern to UNHCR can rely on a durable legal status that ensures national protection of their rights, without discrimination; for stateless people, this means the acquisition or confirmation of nationality. The New York declaration underscored the importance of international support for the inclusion of refugees in national systems and recognized inclusion as central to the attainment of protection and solutions. UNHCR is committed to strengthening partnerships that are supportive of strong and inclusive national systems.

16. In September 2016, the World Bank issued a report entitled, “Forcibly displaced: Towards a development approach supporting refugees, the internally displaced and their hosts”, which emphasized the importance of complementary partnership between humanitarian and development actors. It followed a series of analytical reports, prepared together with UNHCR, on different refugee situations, as well as policy papers on forced displacement endorsed by the World Bank's Development Committee and regional multilateral development banks. These studies and surveys are in line with some of the key conclusions on protracted displacement situations reached at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, notably the need for better data and evidence to inform medium-term planning and programming. The World Bank's Board of Governors approved US\$ 2 billion to support refugee-hosting countries within its next round of International Development Association (IDA) lending covering the period of 2017 to 2019. They also approved an allocation of US\$ 14 billion for fragile, conflict and violence affected States. In 2017, joint World Bank-UNHCR planning missions to countries eligible for support under the IDA allocation for refugees will be conducted to prepare the programmes. To date, missions to Chad, Niger and Pakistan have already been completed. Furthermore, UNHCR is strengthening cooperation with the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, exploring opportunities for closer collaboration in a number of displacement settings.

17. In July 2016, UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) signed an updated memorandum of understanding, underlining the commitment of the two organizations to promoting inclusive and equitable access to decent work, livelihoods and social services and systems. UNHCR is working with the ILO and others to support implementation of the “ILO guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market” at the global, regional and national levels.

18. UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) in June 2016. A Temporary Working Group on Refugees and Migration was then established to provide guidance and recommendations aimed at improving development programming and financing to better support countries of origin, transit and destination and expand the achievement of comprehensive solutions. The OECD and UNHCR have also begun working together on a series of joint “business dialogues”, aimed at addressing the challenges faced by employers when hiring refugees.

19. Through the Solutions Alliance, UNHCR continued to facilitate collaboration between humanitarian and development actors. This alliance has been instrumental in sustaining and nurturing the dialogue on solutions for displaced populations and support for host communities with national governments at the helm. The Solutions Alliance partners in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania are supportive of the evolving work on the CRRF.

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

20. As a member of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), UNHCR participated in preparations for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) resolution for 2017-2020. Adopted in December 2016, the QCPR establishes the following priorities to help achieve the 2030 sustainable development goals: improving system-wide

coordination, including between humanitarian and development actors; enhancing Member State oversight of the work of the United Nations development system; and reforming the Resident Coordinator system. UNHCR continues to work with its development partners in the United Nations to support these policy objectives and the efforts to ensure coherent and coordinated humanitarian and development responses to forced displacement.

21. UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) co-chair the UNDG Human Rights Working Group (HRWG), which aims to integrate human rights into the work of the United Nations development system. In 2016, efforts were aimed at engaging agencies in a number of critical human rights challenges, and the HRWG identified ways to bring United Nations partners in the field closer together to address these challenges. Addressing statelessness was one of the objectives, and a work plan of joint action was agreed upon.

22. In 2013, UNHCR and UNICEF issued guidance on country-level letters of understanding to strengthen partnership in the field and provide consistent support to populations of concern in the areas of: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); education; health and nutrition; and child protection. A new letter of understanding was signed between the two organizations' operations in Ethiopia in 2016, bringing the total number of such letters to eight (the other operations include Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Jordan, Lebanon, Niger, South Sudan and Sudan). UNHCR and UNICEF also continue to work together on education, emergency response, and cash-based interventions, and strengthened their collaboration in the coalition to end child statelessness through an exchange of letters in January 2017.

23. As food and other assistance to refugees are increasingly being provided through cash-based interventions, UNHCR and WFP are concluding a specific addendum on cash assistance to the existing memorandum of understanding. Both organizations are also working on joint vulnerability assessments to better target the beneficiary population, a new data-sharing agreement and monitoring arrangements for cash-based assistance. UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF are committed to coordinating closely on cash-based assistance to ensure predictable and efficient arrangements, allowing for each agency to adhere to respective accountabilities, while delivering together.

24. UNHCR and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis are close to finalizing a framework agreement, which will detail the work modalities between the two entities and facilitate access to funds to meet critical gaps in HIV, tuberculosis and malaria services in refugee situations.<sup>6</sup>

25. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) held a high-level meeting in July 2016, in view of the latter becoming a related organization of the United Nations. Following the meeting, a joint letter, which was signed by the High Commissioner and the Director General, was shared with all of the respective field offices of the two organizations. In the letter, they outlined their agreement to improve coordination in the context of emergency response, joint planning and resource mobilization, data collection, and media and communication.

## **VII. Refugee response coordination**

26. In 2016, UNHCR continued to strengthen the coordination of refugee responses. This included developing technical guidance and capacity-building for UNHCR staff, partners, and host government agencies working together under the Refugee Coordination Model. The deployment of additional staff and other forms of support strengthened operations in the Europe, Burundi and South Sudan emergencies. Taking into account feedback from partners and lessons learned, UNHCR revised and updated learning programmes and trainings for its workforce and for partner staff, to ensure that the Office would continue to discharge its coordination role efficiently and effectively. Commitment

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<sup>6</sup> Also see: EC/68/SC/CRP.3 on global programmes.

and action on strengthening partnerships and coordination in refugee responses was discussed in high-level meetings with IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF and WFP.

27. Consistent with the Refugee Coordination Model, UNHCR extended in 2016 the terms of the Regional Refugee Coordinators responsible for leading operational planning and resource mobilization for the Burundi, Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Europe situations. In 2017, five regional Refugee Response Plans (for the Burundi, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and Europe situations) are in place, covering 19 countries and involving over 340 partners. The CRRF should not be envisaged as a new coordination model and will ensure complementarity between existing tools and mechanisms such as Refugee Response and Humanitarian Response plans, the United Nations and development plans and other coordination initiatives involving a wide range of stakeholders.

28. Where applicable, UNHCR has worked with OCHA under the framework of the “Joint UNHCR-OCHA note on mixed situations”<sup>7</sup>. In April 2016, the High Commissioner and the Emergency Relief Coordinator reiterated their commitment to working together with mutual respect for their mandates, roles and responsibilities. A joint letter to this effect, reconfirming the main elements of the note, was issued in September 2016. Inter-agency missions with IOM, OCHA, UNFPA and UNICEF were undertaken to Cameroon and Sudan.

## **VIII. Inter-Agency Standing Committee and cluster responsibilities**

29. UNHCR continued to implement the Inter-Agency Standing Committee’s (IASC) transformative agenda, working within the established coordination arrangements at the global and field levels.

30. With respect to situations of internal displacement, the global protection cluster, led by UNHCR, followed up on the “whole-of-system review” by appointing a dedicated coordinator and taking forward initiatives on innovation and localization. The protection policy, delivered by the cluster and adopted by the IASC by consensus<sup>8</sup>, commits the humanitarian system to placing protection at the centre of any response. The cluster also issued guidance to humanitarian country teams on how to develop protection strategies. Out of 33 field protection clusters and other mechanisms, UNHCR leads 26. It co-facilitates several clusters with NGOs and co-leads clusters with national institutions, such as the Nigerian Human Rights Commission.

31. UNHCR and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) co-lead the global shelter cluster, which supported 26 country-level clusters in 2016, reaching some 10 million people in need of shelter or non-food items. UNHCR led 11 out of these 26 country-level shelter clusters. In Afghanistan, Chad, Mali and Yemen, 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 the Central African Republic. In the course of 2016, UNHCR’s global shelter cluster support team provided 373 days of mission support to country-level shelter clusters, through 11 field missions to eight countries.

32. The global camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, supported 15 country-level clusters and cluster-like structures worldwide in 2016. In the Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria operations, international NGOs were co-facilitating the cluster at the country or sub-national levels. In 2016, nine field missions in support of five countries were undertaken by UNHCR. The

<sup>7</sup> Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/53679e679.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Available from: [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc\\_policy\\_on\\_protection\\_in\\_humanitarian\\_action\\_0.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_policy_on_protection_in_humanitarian_action_0.pdf).

global CCCM cluster also established its first strategic advisory group, with participation from ACTED, the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Lutheran World Federation. This group provides advice to the global cluster coordinators and issued the 2017-2021 strategic framework,<sup>9</sup> after wide consultations.

33. More agencies and organizations became involved in UNHCR's protection information management project, which aims to simplify the complex data system of protection information. UNHCR, the Danish Refugee Council and the global protection cluster have offered several trainings on this project to dozens of participating organizations in 11 country operations. Other clusters and OCHA are examining how the conceptual framework of the project can apply to them.

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<sup>9</sup> Available from: <http://www.globalccmcluster.org/tools-and-resources/global-ccm-cluster-key-documents>