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**Update on UNHCR's engagement with
internally displaced persons**

Summary

This paper provides an update on UNHCR's work with internally displaced persons. It highlights the organization's role in situations of internal displacement today and presents the internal transformations under way to ensure a decisive and predictable engagement in such situations. It also sets out UNHCR's contributions to strengthening protection, response and solutions for internally displaced persons, building on the momentum generated by the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

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I. Introduction

1. Conflict and violence are forcing ever-increasing numbers of people to flee from their homes, with most finding uncertain refuge within the borders of their own country. At the end of 2017, more than 40 million people were internally displaced, representing a small decrease from the previous year but reflecting a 38 per cent increase since 2012.¹ UNHCR's work in situations of internal displacement has grown as a result. Over the same period, the number of internally displaced persons benefiting from UNHCR's protection activities doubled, and those receiving UNHCR assistance rose by 80 per cent, reaching 10.9 million in 2017.²

II. UNHCR and internal displacement today

2. UNHCR has worked in situations of internal displacement for more than 45 years, ever since the Office extended protection and assistance to refugees returning to southern Sudan and "persons displaced within the country".³ During nearly five decades, UNHCR has responded to the needs of millions of internally displaced persons worldwide and is currently engaging with 33 countries coping with internal displacement. Working with national governments and local actors, alongside other United Nations agencies and partners, UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement has become more robust over time, notably following the 2005 United Nations Humanitarian Reform and the 2011 Inter-Agency Standing Committee Transformative Agenda.

3. In support of United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators as well as United Nations and Humanitarian Country Teams, UNHCR provides protection analysis and contributes to strategy development as part of a system-wide commitment to ensure that protection drives humanitarian action. UNHCR also collaborates closely with governments, national human rights institutions and civil society to promote and develop national legal and policy frameworks and capacities to prevent and respond to internal displacement, as well as to enhance protection and facilitate solutions for internally displaced persons.

4. Over the past decade, UNHCR has invested significantly in global cluster leadership. Within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee framework, UNHCR leads the global protection cluster. It also co-leads the global shelter cluster with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the global camp coordination camp management cluster with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Furthermore, the Office is active in the other global clusters, including water, sanitation and hygiene, health, nutrition, food security, emergency telecommunications, and logistics.

¹ See IDMC's 2018 Global Report on Internal Displacement, which is available from www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/.

² During the same period, UNHCR's budgets for response to internal displacement rose by 80 per cent and expenditures increased by 61 per cent. The current requirements for internal displacement programmes stand at \$1.23 billion, or 15 per cent of UNHCR's 2018 budget.

³ See the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1705 (LIII) of 27 July 1972. See also ECOSOC Resolution 1655 (LII) of 1 June 1972. In a number of resolutions adopted in the 1990s, the United Nations General Assembly defined the principles on which UNHCR's involvement with internally displaced persons should be based, emphasizing that it should be at the request of the United Nations Secretary-General or the competent principal organs of the United Nations, with the consent of the Government concerned; that it should not undermine the institution of asylum; and that it should take into account the complementarities of the mandate and expertise of other relevant organizations. See also A/RES/47/105 of 16 December 1992 (OP14), A/RES/48/116 of 20 December 1993 and A/RES/49/169 of 23 December 1994 (OP10).

5. UNHCR's country-level leadership mirrors that of the global level. UNHCR leads 25 out of the 35 national protection clusters, as well as 12 out of the 26 national shelter clusters, and 10 out of the 16 national camp coordination and camp management clusters. Most national clusters are co-led with partners.

6. UNHCR complements its cluster leadership with operational delivery that contributes to the results agreed upon with partners. UNHCR's overall response is diverse, ranging from delivering assistance and meeting basic needs, such as shelter, to preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence, providing legal aid and documentation, ensuring child protection, and working to preserve housing, land and property rights.

III. Strengthening UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement situations

7. Addressing the annual plenary session of the Executive Committee in October 2016, the High Commissioner committed UNHCR to working more systematically across the entire spectrum of displacement, including through more decisive and predictable engagement with internally displaced persons. This commitment is now anchored in UNHCR's strategic directions (2017-2021).

8. An internal review conducted in 2017 enabled UNHCR to identify the systemic and organization-wide transformations required to make its response to internal displacement more effective. The review's final report⁴ provides a "roadmap" for actions needed to strengthen the Office's response in situations of internal displacement, from preparedness through to solutions. These are grouped under three themes that guide UNHCR's work on internal displacement: ensuring the centrality of protection; working across the full spectrum of displacement; and strengthening automaticity in UNHCR's engagement.⁵

9. The review's wide-ranging recommendations also touch on the key enablers of UNHCR's work: programming and budgeting; data and information management; workforce management; resource mobilization; and inter-agency engagement. Although the review focuses mainly on organizational and internal questions, the fundamental objective is to make UNHCR a better support to governments and a stronger inter-agency partner.

10. In August 2017, the High Commissioner appointed a Special Adviser on Internal Displacement to lead an internal task team to take forward implementation of the changes identified in the review, working with UNHCR's divisions, regional bureaux and relevant country operations. Below is a brief update on implementation of the review's recommendations.

A. Updating UNHCR's policy on internal displacement

11. To achieve greater alignment with its strategic directions and establish a stronger foundation to institutionalize the outcomes of the review, UNHCR is updating its policy on engagement in situations of internal displacement. The

⁴ See "Operational review of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement – final report", September 2017, which is available from www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/5a02d6887/operational-review-unhcrs-engagement-situations-internal-displacement.html.

⁵ The review's call for strengthened automaticity means improving the Office's capacity to respond to situations of internal displacement in a reliable and predictable manner through streamlined internal decision-making, better preparedness and early engagement, consistent programming, and rapidly putting in place required resources and capacities.

current policy framework⁶ dates back to the years following the United Nations Humanitarian Reform. Although complemented by more recent guidance, this policy does not account for the significant investments that UNHCR has made in global cluster leadership, coordination, information management and operational delivery, or reflect changes in the humanitarian landscape.

12. UNHCR's updated policy will set a clear direction for UNHCR's role within the inter-agency system in preparing for and responding to internal displacement, as well as a catalyst in pursuit of durable solutions for internally displaced persons. UNHCR plans to issue the updated policy by the end of 2018.

B. Preparing and engaging early

13. Effective emergency response starts with better preparedness and early engagement in new and evolving situations of internal displacement. This allows UNHCR to step into its leadership role when clusters are activated and launch an effective operational response without delay. To achieve this, UNHCR is establishing clearer accountabilities for Representatives to undertake advanced preparedness measures in support of an inter-agency response to internal displacement. These will be reinforced by measures that aim to meet capacity requirements during the preparedness phase at the country level, with a view to better equipping and enabling UNHCR to engage in a humanitarian crisis from its outset. Proposals to expand UNHCR's standing capacity to deploy coordination, information management and technical personnel in complex humanitarian emergencies are under development.

C. Building the evidence base

14. Sound protection analysis and well-targeted operational responses to internal displacement require quality data and information management. Building on its expertise in refugee situations and experience gained in major internal displacement operations, UNHCR has developed a standard population data management package for internal displacement. Together with IOM and other partners, key elements of this package have been piloted in the Democratic Republic of Congo in preparation for broader roll-out. UNHCR's approach encompasses population estimation, profiling and enrolment for assistance, and further promotes inter-agency collaboration and complementary action.

D. Making solutions comprehensive

15. Although the comprehensive refugee response framework is mainly applied in large-scale refugee situations, many of the lessons learned can help better define UNHCR's role with respect to solutions in internal displacement situations. The newly established Division of Resilience and Solutions is fully integrating internally displaced persons within its work. The Office is also drawing from recent experience and operational practices in countries such as Colombia and Ukraine. Working across borders with refugees and the internally displaced, UNHCR can bring a unique situational perspective and knowledge of affected communities, and engage with them to bring their views and perspectives into longer term national processes, from development to peacebuilding.

⁶ See "UNHCR's role in support of an enhanced humanitarian response to situations of internal displacement – policy framework and implementation strategy" (EC/58/SC/CRP.18), 4 June 2007, available from www.refworld.org/docid/4693775c2.html.

E. Moving towards integrated programming

16. UNHCR's current programming processes, tools and budget framework drive a population-based approach to assessment, planning, implementation and reporting, which can hamper integrated programming. This also creates a risk – and sometimes a reality – that refugee responses are prioritized over those for internally displaced persons, even when needs are similar. UNHCR is updating internal guidance and institutional learning to encourage integrated programming across population groups. This shift will be further facilitated by the creation of a new Integrated Programme Service in the Division of Programme Support and Management, and the development of adapted programming approaches and tools.

F. Building a versatile workforce with expertise

17. UNHCR must develop a versatile workforce to ensure a holistic and integrated response to all populations of concern, while also building a cadre of specialized staff to deliver protection and assistance in complex humanitarian emergencies. To this end, UNHCR is designing a blended inter-agency coordination learning programme for staff to develop the skills and competencies needed to coordinate emergency responses in refugee, internal displacement and mixed situations. A more advanced training programme for cluster coordinators will complement this learning programme. UNHCR is also revising job descriptions to incorporate the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to work effectively in all operational contexts, including internal displacement situations.

IV. Mobilizing global and national action

18. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement⁷ have become the international normative standard for efforts to prevent, address and resolve internal displacement. The twentieth anniversary of these principles in 2018 is a unique opportunity to mobilize a broad range of stakeholders for collective action to strengthen global and national responses to internal displacement. Together with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the global protection cluster, UNHCR led an inclusive process that began in September 2017 to develop a three-year multi-stakeholder plan of action to advance prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced persons.

19. Launched in April 2018, the plan of action identifies four priorities that, if pursued strategically, can contribute to the overall goal of preventing and resolving internal displacement: facilitating the participation of internally displaced persons; developing national laws and policies to enhance protection and promote solutions for internally displaced persons; producing quality data and analysis to design effective responses to internal displacement; and scaling up solutions in protracted situations. The plan focuses on mobilizing action⁸ and making progress at the national level in recognition of the responsibility – and potential – of States to prevent, alleviate and resolve internal displacement.

⁷ See the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2), which are available from www.refworld.org/docid/3d4f95e11.html.

⁸ See “20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: a plan of action for advancing prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced people” (2018-2020), which is available from http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/20180523-gp20-plan-of-action-final.pdf.

20. UNHCR operations around the world are developing or already pursuing initiatives in support of the plan of action. Initiatives to translate the guiding principles into national normative and legislative frameworks are under way with the Governments of Honduras, Mali and Niger. In Colombia, UNHCR is promoting the engagement of internally displaced persons in the country's peace process. UNHCR and partners in Afghanistan are planning a public information campaign to raise awareness of the national policy on internal displacement and facilitate its implementation. In Ukraine, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the UNHCR-led national protection cluster have organized a series of events on the guiding principles, including a roundtable in Kyiv on the role of the internally displaced in peacebuilding.

21. Global and regional events are also planned with the Inter-American System for the protection of human rights, OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as the African Union, which will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) in 2019.
