

**Introductory remarks by George Okoth-Obbo, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations at
67th meeting of the Standing Committee, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme
Room XIX, Palais des Nations
21-22 September 2016, 10.00 am**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. My colleague the Deputy High Commissioner Ms. Kelly Clements would normally be making the introductory remarks on behalf of the Office for this session of the Executive Committee. But as we speak, she is on her way back from New York where she, among others, took part in the UN General Assembly Summit on Refugee and Migration this week. When she takes her normal place on this podium later this afternoon, she will brief you on the results of that signal meeting and indeed others that have taken place in New York. Until then, I am delighted to cover for her and to make these brief remarks, hopefully in a way that will dove-tail with what she will take forward when she arrives.

Mr Chairman, that Summit interrogated the extraordinary forced displacement crisis our World faces today. As you will have heard and read from the reports on it, the Summit has crystallized and reinforced international values, solidarity and responsibility sharing as the basis upon which the international community must move forward in responding predictably, comprehensively, efficiently and with meaningful and effective outcomes, above all for the persons caught in these crises. These, Mr Chairman, are the very same themes which I believe should underlie the institutional due diligence and accountability with which UNHCR is charged to perform and deliver the tasks entrusted upon us which this Committee will discuss with us today and tomorrow.

I trust you will have gleaned from the documents made available already that UNHCR is steady, strong, sound, accountable and strives to be fit for purpose in our financial, budgetary, workforce, asset, administrative governance and oversight. My colleagues will, in their presentations today, further demonstrate the range of steps the Office is continuing to take in the different domains to reinforce and optimize this state of play in both settings of political, civic, law, security and administrative predictability and those which are getting ever increasingly more complex and present compelling and human suffering signal challenges, imponderables, unforeseen dilemmas and even risks that test to the very limit not only our performance, delivery and normative and regulatory orderings, but also, most sadly even the lives of our workers, partners and other players who are at the very frontline of the imperative to save lives and to move people towards solutions.

We thus would like very much to inscribe into our conversation with you today, first, UNHCR's resolute commitment to institutional oversight, accountability and due diligence across all the catalogues you will hear about from budget formulation to implementation of programmes, fraud prevention, the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors that the Controller will elaborate and institutional risk identification and treatment.

At the same time, this commitment and resolution to effectiveness and efficiency in oversight, due diligence and oversight, itself serves and must serve the ultimate accountability of all, namely to save, secure and restore lives: the essential remit of the protection mandate of UNHCR. Normative regulation and compliance must thus go hand in hand with and strike the right balance with the flexibility, nimbleness, good faith situational judgments and action that will allow us without regret to do the right thing and ensure that no harm is allowed to occur to the persons we are entrusted to care for, above all in the complex, unusual operational contexts that I have mentioned already.

In this connection, let me draw attention to perhaps the most important questions on our agenda today to which normative regulation must creatively and urgently respond both inside and outside UNHCR namely, on one hand, the duty of care and support to our workers including of course safety and security, stress management and, on the other hand, contingency planning and preparedness on the other hand. You will hear from my colleagues the Directors of DHRM and DESS the steps UNHCR is taking in these respects. But these are questions in which we see the direct support of Member States themselves as fundamental, from taking measures in your respective countries that will improve access, safety, working and living conditions of humanitarian workers, including of UNHCR, facilitate operations, including removing or reducing administrative and bureaucratic hurdles for instance in importing and using safety equipment, and illuminating and advocating for staff safety and welfare in all pertinent contexts including of course in resource support.

Talking about resources, the Controller will present and seek the Executive Committee's approval for our revised biennial programme budget for 2016-2017. I would like to conclude on this note by letting you know not only this approval, but as well the actual financial support that UNHCR receives from the Member States that support us with financial donorship is very much appreciated. This allows the Office to deliver the activities and support which in turn strengthen the protection and all other solutions which host states and their respective communities provide for all the persons – refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, returnees – are entrusted to protect and find solutions

for which I also would like to register our appreciation for. Of course, as the Controller's presentation we are obliged to keep coming back to you through supplementary appeals to seek more and more such support. I reiterate UNHCR's appeal for you to respond as timeously and fully as you are able to do and once again thank you all very much for all your support.

Thank you for listening to me and I look forward to fruitful discussions over these two days.

GOO / AHC-O / 21 / 09 / 2016.