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**Update on UNHCR's operations in Africa****A. Situational context**

The upward trend in the number of displaced persons in Africa continued in the course of 2018. As of June 2018, countries in Africa were host to 24.2 million persons of concern to UNHCR, which comprised 35 per cent of the global population of refugees, stateless and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In particular, the number of IDPs rose by 1 million from 14.5 to 15.5 million during the first half of 2018. This increase was mainly triggered by conflict and insecurity in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Somalia.

*Great Lakes*

There were close to 367,000 Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania (220,000), Rwanda (70,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (42,000) and Uganda (35,000). In 2018, over 7,000 individuals fled to neighbouring countries, while more than 56,000 voluntarily returned to Burundi since September 2017, mainly from the United Republic of Tanzania. Facilitated returns will continue in 2019. The situation in Burundi remained complex, with significant human rights concerns persisting and unresolved political tensions causing the refugee movements. Against this background, countries in the region have maintained open borders to Burundian asylum-seekers, providing them with crucial protection.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has caused one of the world's most complex displacement crises. Conflict has resulted in the internal displacement of over 4.5 million people. Many parts of the country saw sporadic violence, including intercommunal clashes in the western areas of the country in late December 2018, which triggered the displacement of 16,000 refugees into the neighbouring Republic of the Congo. This represented the largest influx of refugees in the country in almost a decade. Since the beginning of 2018, 120,000 Congolese refugees have continued to flee to Uganda, although numbers dwindled in the last quarter of the year. This slower pace is expected to continue in the first half of 2019.

*East Africa and the Horn of Africa*

As Somalia continues its process of State rebuilding, several attacks have occurred, notably in the cities of Baidoa and Mogadishu. These have caused hundreds of casualties and significantly affected humanitarian agencies operating in the country. Despite these ongoing challenges, the number of Somali refugees in the region continued to decline from a peak of some 1 million in January 2013 as a result of organized and spontaneous returns. Approximately 87,000 have returned through assisted voluntary repatriation since December 2014, including 83,000 from Kenya, 3,100 from Yemen and 1,200 returnees from other countries. An estimated 2.6 million Somalis were internally displaced.

The "Revitalized agreement of the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan" reached in September 2018 has rekindled hope that one of the worst displacement crisis in

Africa could be resolved in the near future. A relative reduction in conflict induced violence in parts of the country has been observed, although there remained nearly 2 million IDPs and close to 2.2 million refugees hosted by six neighbouring countries. While the political and security situation in South Sudan was precarious, some spontaneous returns were observed.

*Central and West Africa*

Five years into the crisis in north-eastern Nigeria, 232,000 Nigerian refugees are living either in camps or with host communities in Niger (119,000), Cameroon (102,000) and Chad (11,000). The ongoing conflict has also resulted in the internal displacement of more than 2.4 million people inside Nigeria but also in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Returns to Nigeria continue to be reported. While spontaneous in most cases, there were also reports of forced returns despite advocacy efforts and commitments made in the framework of tripartite agreements.

Insecurity in the south-western and north-western regions of Cameroon has resulted in internal displacement and flight into neighbouring Nigeria. The number of IDPs is estimated at 437,000, and over 32,000 Cameroonian refugees have been registered in Nigeria. Should this trend continue, the reception and assistance capacity will be strengthened in neighbouring countries.

The Central African Republic reached the highest recorded level of displacement since a new wave of conflict began in 2016, with nearly 1.3 million people displaced, including more than 575,000 refugees and close to 650,000 IDPs. Large-scale return is unlikely due to the deteriorating security situation.

The Lake Chad Basin is facing a complex humanitarian and protection crisis. Some 7.1 million people have been affected across north-eastern Nigeria, Cameroon's Far North Region, western Chad and south-eastern Niger. In total, there were 2.5 million IDPs in the Lake Chad Basin region, of which 2 million were in Nigeria, 244,000 in Cameroon, 163,000 in Chad and 104,000 in Niger.

The volatile security environment in northern and central Mali, including along the border with Burkina Faso, continued to result in the displacement of local communities, jeopardizing the protection of civilians and preventing individuals from returning to their homes. There were some 138,000 Malian refugees in the region, including 57,000 in Niger, 56,000 in Mauritania and 25,000 in Burkina Faso.

*Regionalization and decentralization*

The Regional Bureau for Africa, currently based in Geneva, will be divided into three regional bureaux to be established in Dakar, Nairobi and Pretoria during the fourth quarter of 2019. This is part of an ongoing regionalization and decentralization process within UNHCR. The core objective of decentralization is to rebalance the organizational design to place capacities, authority and resources closer to the point of delivery, enable greater flexibility in the use of resources and leverage partnerships in the context of broader UN reforms and in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

**B. Achieving the global strategic priorities**

**(i) Redoubling efforts in the search for durable solutions**

*Voluntary repatriation*

A greater number of expressions of intent to return among refugees have been reported in several countries across Africa, with political change cited as a motivating factor. Of those expressing such intent are refugees originating from Ethiopia, Namibia, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.

In particular, more than 7,000 Ethiopian refugees and asylum-seekers in Djibouti, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen have communicated their intent to return. Movements are expected to begin during the first half of 2019.

In Somalia, efforts continued to create an enabling environment for the safe, sustainable and voluntary return and reintegration of Somali refugees, in line with the objectives of the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia. With the support of the international community, interventions are under way in order to enhance the education and skills development training for refugees, reduce their dependence on humanitarian assistance, and prepare them for gainful employment in host communities and upon return. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has been instrumental in the advancement of these efforts, which are part of the regional comprehensive refugee response.

UNHCR welcomed the signing of the Revitalized agreement of the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in September 2018. An increase in spontaneous returns have been subsequently observed, with more than 20,000 individuals returning since November 2017. Many of them have reported experiencing difficulties in returning to their place of origin, as their lands have been either destroyed or occupied. UNHCR is not organizing the repatriation of refugees to South Sudan at this time. Efforts are under way, however, to prepare for future movements, including by ensuring updated refugee registration data, and safeguarding refugee access to accurate and objective information on the conditions in their locations of origin.

Refugees from Zimbabwe have expressed an intent to voluntarily return from Botswana, with the movement of 275 refugees in Dukwi expected before midyear. The repatriation of Namibian refugees to Botswana is also expected to begin before June 2019.

The voluntary repatriation of refugees from Chad to Sudan, as well as from Sudan to Chad, resumed in November 2018, after a short pause due to rainy season conditions. Movements in 2019 will continue, with surveys of refugee intent ongoing.

In West Africa, UNHCR supported the return of approximately 2,800 Ivorian refugees in 2018. As improvements in the political stability are being achieved, a sharp increase in returns is expected.

The last phase of the Comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees ended in December 2017. Though UNHCR has discontinued general assistance to most Rwandan refugees, it will continue to provide basic support to individuals deemed vulnerable. With some 250,000 Rwandan refugees and former refugees still outside of the country, UNHCR will continue to engage bilaterally with concerned countries to support solutions, including voluntary repatriation and local integration.

#### *Local integration*

While voluntary repatriation remains a preferred solution for many refugees in Africa, a number of them have expressed the wish to locally integrate. In Ethiopia, follow-up to the local integration efforts continued for refugees who have been in the country for more than two decades, in line with the pledge made by the Government at the Leaders' Summit. New legislative reform is expected to help to facilitate this option and allow greater refugee access to freedom of movement and work. Efforts are also under way to explore how regional frameworks may complement national laws in offering pathways to long-term legal status that offers protection safeguards.

#### *Resettlement*

Following a sharp decline in 2017, the Africa region saw a significant increase in the number of resettlement spaces in 2018. As a result, the cases of 36,400 refugees were submitted for

resettlement, an increase of 69 per cent over the previous year. The rise in available spaces is mainly due to more countries offering resettlement quotas for Africa, including from the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes subregions and from the detention centres in Libya through the emergency transit mechanism in Niger.

Departures for resettlement countries also increased from 15,800 in 2017 to 19,300 in 2018. In 2019, UNHCR expects to submit the cases of at least 35,000 refugees in the Africa region for resettlement.

**(ii) Promoting a favourable protection environment**

While the protection environment in Africa remains generally strong, UNHCR is concerned about instances in which refugees or asylum-seekers have been forced to return to their country of origin. Onward movement has also placed refugees and asylum-seekers at great risk. UNHCR continues to work closely with States to strengthen asylum institutions and refugee protection.

In December 2018, the Government of South Sudan acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. UNHCR also welcomed Ethiopia's historic new refugee proclamation in January 2019, which will enable refugees to acquire work permits, access primary education, obtain drivers' licenses, register life events, such as births and marriages and open bank accounts. In September 2018, the Government of Guinea adopted a new refugee law that aims to enhance refugee access to education, employment and durable solutions, especially local integration. By year end, the National Assembly of Niger enacted a law protecting IDPs based on the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), becoming one of the first States parties to develop a comprehensive national legislation on internal displacement

With respect to registration, UNHCR continued to roll out case management modules, the biometric identity management system and a newly developed "rapid application", which allows for off-line registration in areas with limited connectivity. Efforts are ongoing to support governments in establishing national registration systems and ensuring interoperability between systems. The information collected during registration provides the comprehensive population data needed for programme planning, including for shelter, food, water, health and sanitation facilities, cash-based interventions and other forms of targeted assistance. Registration data is also an important tool to safeguard the integrity of refugee protection systems and prevent and combat fraud, corruption and crime, such as the human trafficking from Africa.

The strengthening of anti-fraud and integrity systems has been undertaken in several operations in Africa and will continue in 2019. UNHCR held regional workshops in Kenya, South Africa and Uganda, and multi-functional, anti-fraud support missions to Burundi, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda also took place.

*Comprehensive refugee response*

The comprehensive refugee response is currently under way in eight countries in the region: Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and Zambia, as well as through a regional approach for the Somali refugee situation.

A number of pilot counties applying the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) in Africa have enacted new laws and regulations that guarantee the rights of refugees and expand their access to national services. For example, Djibouti has undertaken to end its encampment policy, issue refugee identification cards and grant refugees access to education, livelihoods and improved legal services. Through the new refugee proclamation, Ethiopia aims to provide more refugees with access to education and national civil registration, and

greater freedom of movement. Through its “Jobs Compact”,<sup>1</sup> it has also created economic opportunities for refugees alongside Ethiopian nationals, including in industrial parks. In addition, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia are in the process of including refugees in their national health systems. Related efforts will continue further in 2019.

The application of the CRRF has also demonstrated how a wide range of stakeholders, including multiple sectors of government, refugees, youth, cities, regional and international organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector and faith communities, can generate support for countries hosting large numbers of refugees. The Uganda Investment Authority, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), created business investment profiles in 11 refugee-hosting districts.

Following the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration, together with its plan of action, IGAD has held a series of regional thematic conferences with the support of the European Union, UNDP, UNHCR and the World Bank. In 2019, IGAD is expected to convene a conference on jobs and livelihoods for refugees

UNHCR and the World Bank have continued to further their cooperation in Africa, focusing on the implementation of the World Bank’s International Development Association refugee and host-community sub-window launched in 2016 to help refugees and host communities in low-income countries. To date, projects in various sectors including agriculture, education, health, nutrition, governance, rural development or social protection in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, the Congo (Republic of), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda have been approved for funding under this financing facility. Progress towards implementation is expected to continue in 2019-2020 in these countries while other projects may be considered in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Rwanda. This initiative is the most significant progress made by UNHCR in collaborating with development actors towards a more comprehensive response to forced displacement challenges.

At its 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Summit held in Nouakchott, Mauritania in July 2018, the African Union (AU) Assembly adopted a decision declaring 2019 as the year of “refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons” in the context of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects on Refugee Problems in Africa. A formal launch of the commemorative year will take place in February 2019. AU member States and other stakeholders will participate in six consultative meetings across the continent, focusing on various themes. These will include the ratification of the Kampala Convention, the role of parliamentarians in displacement situations, the supervision and monitoring of the 1969 OAU Convention, solidarity and responsibility-sharing, protection sensitive responses to mixed movements in Africa, as well as ending statelessness in Africa.

#### *Statelessness*

In West Africa, member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) continued to implement the “Banjul plan of action on the eradication of statelessness (2017-2024)”, with Guinea-Bissau officially adopting a national action plan to end statelessness in November 2018.

Building on the 2017 recommendations made by the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa, a regional expert meeting was convened by the Government of South Africa and UNHCR in November 2018 to review a draft declaration and action plan on statelessness which will be submitted to member States of the Southern African Development Community for consideration. Regional meetings in the lead-up to the High-level segment on statelessness

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<sup>1</sup> The “Jobs Compact” refers to the Government of Ethiopia’s industrialization efforts, which are creating jobs for Ethiopians and refugees alike.

at the 70<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the Executive Committee are also planned in the Great Lakes Region and Southern Africa in 2019.

In Kenya, in close cooperation with the Government and civil society organizations, a national action plan to end statelessness in the country was drafted. UNHCR is providing technical support to help turn this positive development into practical solutions for the stateless persons in the country.

In the course of 2019, an analysis of UNHCR's response involving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals will be undertaken in countries in eastern, southern and western Africa, including by mapping the processes, gaps and appropriate solutions for LGBTI persons of concern. Tailored protection and solutions strategies will be developed in order to promote adherence to international protection standards and expand asylum space for LGBTI individuals who are in need of international protection in Africa.

### **C. Financial information**

The 2019 comprehensive needs budget for Africa, approved by the Executive Committee at its annual plenary session in October 2018, amounted to \$2,676.1 million. By the end of January 2019, the budget increased by \$44.2 million, reflecting supplementary budgets established in response to the Cameroon situation.

In 2018, most activities related to protection and emergency response, accounting for more than 80 per cent of UNHCR's expenditure in Africa. The remaining 20 per cent largely went towards funding reintegration activities for Ivorian, Malian, Somali and Sudanese refugees who recently repatriated. In 2019, providing assistance and protection in seven major situations (i.e. Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan) will remain an operational priority. Due to funding constraints, UNHCR will continue to prioritize life-saving activities, particularly in emergency situations, over more sustainable activities.

As at 31 January 2019, the needs for Africa are 5 per cent funded after considering the indicative allocation of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions.

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