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Overview of UNHCR's operational strategies in Africa

The operational environment in Africa is characterized by new and ongoing emergencies, as well as by growing opportunities to bring closure to several protracted refugee situations.

A. Situational analysis including new developments**Latest developments**

In mid-January, fighting between Tuareg rebels and Malian forces resumed, breaking a 2009 agreement that had officially ended the Tuareg rebellion. Recent attacks in northern Mali have led some 63,300 people to flee into Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger. UNHCR quickly deployed emergency response teams to the region to assess needs and has dispatched non-food items and tents in Niger where the Government has provided food and a site to relocate the refugees from the border towns.

In northern Nigeria, following intensified attacks by Boko Haram causing massive internal displacement, UNHCR has stepped up emergency preparedness for potential refugee movements into neighbouring countries.

The gradual stabilization of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire has led over 100,000 refugees to return home spontaneously and the authorities in Abidjan to sign tripartite agreements with UNHCR and the Governments of Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Togo. In 2012, the Office will continue to promote opportunities for return in safety and dignity for refugees who seek to repatriate, while ensuring protection for those who still need it.

In Somalia, the ongoing drought, military and security developments create a very uncertain environment for humanitarian activities. UNHCR nonetheless has distributed emergency assistance packages to 400,000 people inside Somalia, and has enhanced its presence in Mogadishu reaching some 100,000 people with protection advocacy, including on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response. The Office's strategy also includes engagement in recovery and development frameworks for protracted IDP situations, especially in Somaliland and Puntland.

In Kenya, the worsening security environment in the Dadaab operation has had a severe impact on humanitarian operations. The new security paradigm in Dadaab includes the involvement of local networks, and reinforces the fundamental importance of working closely together with the Government, the host communities, and the refugees.

In Ethiopia, the number of new refugee arrivals from Somalia increased dramatically at the end of 2011. The construction of two new camps has helped relieve crowding in the existing camps. In 2012, UNHCR will continue to provide life-saving assistance, deliver essential services to meet refugees' basic needs and ensure that international protection standards are maintained. The largely peaceful referendum on the independence of South Sudan has been followed by armed conflict in the border areas of the new country with Sudan. Since August last year, fierce fighting in the disputed territory of Abyei, Southern

Kordofan and Blue Nile states has provoked widespread displacement, with an estimated 80,000 people seeking refuge in South Sudan and Ethiopia in the latter half of 2011. In both countries, UNHCR's immediate protection response centred on relocating refugees in newly established camps away from the border.

Ensuring the security of refugees, IDPs and humanitarian personnel is still a major challenge for UNHCR and partners in Africa. Attacks against aid workers and refugees themselves have continued, and safety and security will remain a major priority in 2012.

In Chad, UNHCR will continue providing its support to the *Détachement Intégré de Sécurité* (DIS) which has been instrumental in preventing the recruitment of children in armed groups and in reducing incidents of sexual and gender-based violence around the camps.

Armed conflict continued unabated in several parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where UNHCR responds to the needs of the displaced, in particular women who have been victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Most of areas in North and South Kivu remain inaccessible for humanitarian workers due to insecurity.

Redoubling the search for durable solutions

Comprehensive solutions strategies

UNHCR is pursuing efforts to bring closure to three of Africa's longstanding refugee situations for Angolan, Liberian and Rwandan refugees, either through providing a last opportunity for facilitated voluntary return to the country of origin or by finding an alternative legal status that would allow those concerned to remain in the country of asylum. Following multilateral meetings with all parties concerned, UNHCR has issued recommendations that the States concerned implement all aspects of the comprehensive strategies leading to the cessation of refugee status, as follows:

- for Rwandan refugees who fled between 1959 and 1998 – by 30 June 2013;
- for Angolan refugees who fled their country as a result of the conflicts between 1961 and 2002 – by 30 June 2012; and
- for Liberian refugees who fled the civil wars from 1989 and 2003 – by 30 June 2012.

Voluntary repatriation

Following the independence referendum, by the end of 2011, 360,000 Southern Sudanese had returned to South Sudan. An estimated 700,000 South Sudanese living in Khartoum may also opt to move back, and the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the voluntary return of more than 300,000 South Sudanese to South Sudan.

Preparations are underway for a last massive repatriation of the majority of the estimated 135,000 Angolan refugees residing in asylum countries at the end of 2011.

The voluntary repatriation operation for Mauritanian refugees from northern Senegal resumed in November 2011 and is expected to be completed by the end of March 2012, with the return of some 6,500 refugees. Local integration opportunities are being explored with the Senegalese authorities for some 14,000 Mauritanian refugees who have chosen to remain in Senegal.

Local integration

Local integration has re-emerged as a viable option for refugees in Africa. In Gabon, where the Government declared the cessation of refugee status for Congolese refugees from the Congo in 2011, a durable solution has been found for 6,600 refugees, principally through

the issuance of residency permits for over 5,300. In Zambia, the authorities have offered local integration opportunities for 10,000 Angolan refugees. UNHCR and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, with the strong support of the international community, have already made considerable progress in respect of the naturalization of some 160,000 former Burundian refugees. However, the planned relocation of this group has now been postponed, pending a review by Government officials of the overall integration programme. In 2011, UNHCR and the Tanzanian Government carried out an interview exercise for some 37,000 Burundian refugees in Mtabila camp and discussed modalities for the closure of the camp and the repatriation of those found not to be in need of international protection. In Burundi, the National Commission on Land and Other Property is ready to work with UNHCR to identify available land which returnees could purchase with their repatriation grant. In eastern Sudan, it is anticipated that between 2012 and 2014, the Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) will support the transition of nine camps to self-reliant settlements.

Resettlement

During 2011, over 21,000 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration and more than 10,000 departed from Africa. UNHCR will continue advocating for more resettlement places in 2012 and beyond, and estimates the number of submissions in 2012 at 50,000 refugees out of a total of 293,000 refugees who have been identified as being in need of resettlement on the continent. In 2012, priority will be given to some 31,000 Somali refugees in Dadaab and to the 9,500 Eritrean refugees who sought refuge in eastern Sudan before 1 January 2005, for whom resettlement remains the only viable option. The Office will also sustain resettlement as an integral part of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for some 9,600 Congolese refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Promoting a favourable protection environment

UNHCR works closely with Governments across the continent to strengthen their national legislative and institutional frameworks and capacities for the protection of refugees and IDPs. In Cameroon, a Presidential decree on the management of refugee affairs was passed in November 2011, providing for the establishment of a National Eligibility and Appeals Commission.

UNHCR and the Government of Rwanda have completed a joint verification exercise for all refugees in camps to identify more targeted protection and assistance programmes. In 2012, UNHCR will also continue to advocate for the adoption of draft asylum legislation in the Congo and in South Sudan.

Over the past two years, UNHCR has noted a worrying rise in the *refoulement* of asylum-seekers and refugees to Eritrea, as well as a sharp increase in reported instances of human trafficking and abductions from the refugee camps along the border between eastern Sudan and Eritrea. In 2012, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will implement a joint project in Sudan to enhance the capacity of local authorities to manage mixed migratory movements effectively and in a protection-sensitive manner.

UNHCR is working closely with IOM and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to find ways to reduce the risk of death for asylum-seekers and migrants at sea, and to support Governments in improving mechanisms to deal with these situations. A meeting of international experts convened by UNHCR in Djibouti in late 2011 considered a Model Framework for Cooperation in Rescue at Sea Operations involving Asylum-Seekers and Refugees, based on UNHCR's 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and International Migration.

It is anticipated that the African Union (AU) Convention for the protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa may come into force in 2012: 35 AU Member States have so far signed the Convention, while 13 have ratified, or are in the process of depositing instruments of ratification with the African Union, and nine others have

completed the ratification process at the national level. The Convention needs 15 ratifications to enter into effect.

In Somalia, UNHCR and its partners have devised a Population Movement Tracking (PMT) system and a Protection Monitoring Network through which UNHCR and partners can report on the situation of civilians affected by violence and support needs for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In 2012, a special project will support a regional approach to addressing female genital mutilation in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen where large numbers of Somali refugees are hosted.

Statelessness

In 2011, efforts to increase the number of African States parties to the conventions on statelessness resulted in the accession of Benin and Nigeria to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions, while 12 other States pledged to accede or to consider accession to one or both instruments. The adoption of nationality laws that prevent and/or reduce statelessness will also be one of UNHCR's priorities for 2012.

In November 2011, UNHCR convened the first international discussion on statelessness issues in Southern Africa to help raise awareness and provide a common understanding of the profiles of stateless populations and those at risk of statelessness in the region. Statelessness-related mapping exercises are currently being carried out in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Urban refugee policy

Operationalizing UNHCR's urban refugee policy in Africa will remain a key objective in 2012. In Nairobi, most refugees now have access to City Council Clinics for primary health care treatment, and may be referred to hospitals for secondary and tertiary treatment. Greater access to education for refugee children has also been achieved with many schools, and a livelihoods assessment will form the basis for a strategy to empower urban refugees economically and socially.

B. Financial information

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) for UNHCR's operations in Africa resulted in a consolidated budgetary requirement of \$1.6 billion for 2012.

In February 2012, a Supplementary Appeal for \$144.9 million was launched for new arrivals of Sudanese refugees in South Sudan and Ethiopia. These additional requirements are to meet critical assistance needs in refugee camps and settlements in those two countries. During the same month, the Mali refugee situation was declared an emergency and UNHCR launched an appeal amounting to \$35.5 million to respond to the most urgent needs in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania.

In 2012, some aspects of the comprehensive strategies for the Angolan and Liberian refugees may require additional resources, as they were not foreseen during the planning cycle which took place in early 2011.
