

**Remarks by the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations,  
Mr. Raouf Mazou  
Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's  
Programme (77<sup>th</sup> meeting)**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

*Geneva, 10 March 2020*

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Delegates,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to address the Standing Committee in my new capacity as Assistant High Commissioner for Operations. I am honored to be taking on this role and look forward to a very close collaboration.

This year, for the first time, the Standing Committee will hear - under this agenda item - from seven field-based Regional Bureau Directors. Indeed, in December 2019, UNHCR concluded the relocation of the Regional Bureaux, marking the beginning of a new decentralized and regionalized organizational structure.

While it is still early days, positive changes are already noticeable. Better oversight of field operations – constituting a strong second line of defense from a risk management point of view, much better and more informed support provided to Country Offices, a more coherent regional management of refugee situations and better guidance for an effective implementation of programmes and UN reforms.

It is also worth noting that following a management restructuring, the functions until recently performed by the Division of Programme Support and Management have been transferred to

two entities: the new Division in charge of Strategic Planning and Results, which the Deputy High Commissioner just referred to, and the Division for Resilience and Solutions (DRS) led by Mr. Sajjad Malik, the newly appointed Director, who will present the agenda item on global programmes.

The number of persons of concern to UNHCR stood – at the end of 2018 – at 70.8 million. Considering the number of ongoing emergencies, nine declared by UNHCR at present, this figure is unfortunately expected to continue to rise and may well exceed 72 million as of December 2019, once final and validated numbers are available. UNHCR’s ability to respond swiftly to new situations, like the unfolding situation in the Sahel, and maintain humanitarian programmes in support of displaced populations and their hosts remain of crucial importance.

Mr. Chairman,

The Global Compact on Refugees, affirmed in late 2018 - following the pilot implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework - is an exceptional instrument for better international cooperation and effective solidarity. Forward-looking, whole-of-society approaches are yielding positive results in easing pressure on host communities, building refugee self-reliance, increasing third country solutions and paving the way for sustainable returns.

The three Support Platforms launched during the Global Refugee Forum at the end of last year are most probably the best demonstration of a “New Deal” in the search for solutions to the Afghan refugee situation as well as to displacement situations in Central America and in the Horn of Africa. Each of the high-level launch events was marked by significant commitments of support by a broad and diverse alliance of States, partners and other stakeholders.

A crucial element underpinning the successful implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees is the increased partnership with development actors in responding to refugee situations. In this regard, the significant commitment of bilateral and multilateral partners in addressing the long-term development needs of both refugee and host populations must be commended. This support is crucial in moving from short term humanitarian responses to greater resilience and long term solutions.

Similarly, the private sector is expanding its role in facilitating the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, including through innovative livelihood programmes, education and employment opportunities; investment in refugee-led companies; and access to connectivity, to name a few. All of these approaches – in addition to the crucial resources mobilized by businesses and philanthropies - have the potential of transforming the lives of refugees and their hosts.

A better management of the wealth of data available on refugees and their hosts is also key for the success of socio-economic inclusion. In that regard, I wish to stress the crucial role the Joint Data Center established with the World Bank last year will play in improving the collection and analysis of socio-economic data in relation to forced displacement.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to draw attention to the rapidly rising numbers of internally displaced persons. While new situations erupt, protracted situations continue. As of mid-2019, there were 43.9 million internally displaced people worldwide.

We are strengthening our operational engagement in internal displacement to be as consistent and predictable as our support to refugees. Indeed, UNHCR issued an updated IDP policy in September 2019. We are currently responding to conflict and disaster-induced internal

displacement in over 32 operations, spanning the spectrum from emergency preparedness and response to solutions.

Among our commitments, we have further prioritized some USD 50 million to enable operations to reinforce their engagement. This seed funding will require additional financial support for the momentum to be sustained across the range of over 32 IDP operations to ensure consistent delivery and a strong leadership.

UNHCR is also adjusting its systems, processes and tools to facilitate the IDP Step-Up including (1) enhanced capacity and workforce investment, (2) the establishment of a position of Principal Advisor on Internal Displacement; (3) the launch of an IDP Initiative which demonstrates the Step-Up in nine target operations; and (4) overhauled systems for integrated and equitable programming targeting all persons of concern to UNHCR.

Mr. Chairman,

Last October marked the mid-way point of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024. It was a time to take stock of the many achievements to date and renew our shared resolve to end the scourge of statelessness. The hundreds of pledges made at the EXCOM High-Level Segment were a welcome indication of the political will of many. Everything must be done to support and accelerate their implementation.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The link between climate change, disasters, and displacement is by now well established. In some cases, climate-related factors can drive cross-border displacement, but the majority of people displaced by disasters and weather-related events remain in their country.

High Commissioner Grandi recognized the importance of climate change as a potential driver of displacement, as well as the impact it has on displaced populations living in climate hotspots. As a result, a position of Special Advisor on Climate Action has been established.

The organization is now working on four axis: (1) highlighting the relevant legal frameworks to address protection gaps resulting from cross-border displacement in the context of climate change; (2) mitigating the environmental impact of refugee crises through renewable energy, reforestation and access to clean fuels and technology; (3) reducing the environmental impact of our own operational footprint, in particular our greenhouse gas emissions – at Headquarters, and in the field; and (4) working with partners to minimize the risks faced by refugees and host communities residing in climate hotspot by strengthening resilience, reducing disaster and climate-induced risks and finally taking preparedness measures.

Finally, regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus, we are collaborating with host Governments and WHO to ensure that refugees are included in response plans and provide specific support as required. An appeal will be launched in the coming days to allow us to responds to additional requirements. This crisis is a reminder that to effectively combat any public health emergency, everyone – including refugees and internally displaced people – should be able to access health facilities and services in a non-discriminatory manner. An appeal will be launched in the coming days to support prevention and response efforts in refugee sites and host countries.

I will conclude by thanking you again for the long-standing commitment to UNHCR, for the crucial financial support we receive, and for the many significant and impactful commitments Member States made at the Global Refugee Forum. I look forward to continue working with you in addressing the challenges ahead.

Thank you.