

Foreword

by the High Commissioner

The 2001 Global Appeal offers a comprehensive view of UNHCR's operations and requirements for the coming year, reflecting a commitment to making our objectives and needs clear, our operations transparent and the information that governments and our other partners require readily accessible.

We see prospects for making headway on the ground in crucial operations in 2001. The emergency phase has ended in East Timor and Kosovo, setting the stage for UNHCR to reduce humanitarian activities and hand over responsibilities to UN missions and development actors. New windows of opportunity for solutions to forced displacement are also opening up elsewhere in the Balkans and in the Horn of Africa.

Africa will continue to demand the greatest share of UNHCR's resources and attention during the coming year. Bitter conflicts in Central and West Africa are at a crossroads between peace and more war. UNHCR is ready to help refugees go home when these fragile peace processes open the way, but we must be prepared to respond should renewed fighting dash these hopes, cause more displacement and leave people in exile.

During 2001, UNHCR will carry forward several initiatives aimed at responding to the new and more complex humanitarian environment. My Office is implementing a concrete plan of action to strengthen our emergency preparedness and response capacity. Following the brutal killings of our four colleagues in West Timor and Guinea in September 2000, we are also reinforcing staff security arrangements and redoubling efforts to implement concrete measures to ensure security in areas populated by refugees.

To mark the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR has begun Global Consultations to revitalise the international protection regime. Our purpose is not to renegotiate the Convention. Rather, we hope to promote its full implementation and to develop the new approaches, tools and standards needed to ensure its continuing vitality and relevance.

We are also modernising UNHCR to rise to the challenges of a technologically advanced and globalised world by decentralising management, revamping our human resources policies and practices, and making the investments needed to take full advantage of the revolution in information technology and telecommunications.

This 2001 Global Appeal will be the last during my tenure as High Commissioner. I am very grateful for the confidence in my Office demonstrated by donors through their financial support over the past decade. As in recent years, however, severe funding shortfalls have continued to plague UNHCR in 2000 – despite some considerable efforts on our part to make the budgeting and reporting process more transparent and to improve resource management.

We have been forced repeatedly to prioritise and reduce the budget. The cutbacks have curtailed activities with a direct bearing on UNHCR's policy priorities – women, children and the environment. My Office's relations with refugee and host communities, governments and our NGO implementing partners have been badly strained. The lack of consistent and reliable funding also hampers our efforts to implement the reforms and improvements that governments expect.

Let me urge our friends and supporters to ensure that the resources UNHCR receives match the responsibilities entrusted to us and the budget approved by the Executive Committee. My hope is that the 2001 Global Appeal will rally support and a renewed commitment to protecting refugees, meeting their vital needs and finding solutions for their plight.

Together, we can make a difference.

