

**Bullet point summary of the Strategic Presentation on
UNHCR's Operations in Africa**

**26th meeting of the Standing Committee
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I. INTRODUCTION

- The year 2002 ended with mixed results in Africa. Some peace initiatives are promising (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan), but conflicts persist - both new and old (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Central Africa, Great Lakes). Famine, poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic also added to this difficult environment.
- Nevertheless, prospects for durable solutions for some groups of refugees have improved and refugee figures have continued to decrease this year. Thousands of Angolan refugees have spontaneously repatriated and Eritrean, Sierra Leonean and Somali refugees (North-West Somalia) have also returned in UNHCR repatriation programmes. It is hoped that if a number of peace processes can be consolidated in 2003, this will allow the start up of some fairly substantial repatriation movements.
- Conflict and unrest continued in areas of **Central Africa** and the **Great Lakes region**, but with some windows of opportunity. These include: Pretoria Agreement on DRC (potential return of 377,000 Congolese refugees); recent signing of understandings in Burundi between the Government and three of the four major opposition groups (800,000 Burundi refugees could eventually return). Repatriation of some 23,000 Rwandan refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania during 2002. However, in the Central African Republic (CAR) the situation remains tense, preventing the return of 27,000 refugees from neighbouring countries.
- In the **East and Horn of Africa**, instability in most parts of Southern Somalia (Somali refugees from this region remain in Kenya and Yemen), whereas North-West Somalia remains relatively stable (Somali refugees returning from Ethiopia and Djibouti). Repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan has temporarily stopped but will hopefully still be concluded this year. Kenya-based peace talks on Sudan give rise to hopes for the return of 375,000 Sudanese refugees in exile in the region.
- In **West Africa**, voluntary repatriation continued in Sierra Leone (72,000 refugees were assisted to return during 2002; the operation is to continue in 2003 with planned return movements for an additional 50,000 persons). The security situation in Liberia has deteriorated further (internal displacement and 44,000 new refugees fleeing into Sierra Leone). Civil war in Côte d'Ivoire has caused 40,000 Liberian refugees to return to a precarious situation in Liberia, while some 35,000 Ivorians have also sought asylum in neighbouring countries, especially in Liberia.
- In **Southern Africa**, peace brought about in Angola by the Lusaka agreement has led to hopes for the eventual repatriation of 215,000 camp-based refugees from Zambia, Namibia and DRC. Some 90,000 refugees have already repatriated spontaneously. UNHCR's organised voluntary repatriation programme is expected to start in May 2003. Reintegration challenges for the refugees and the displaced will be formidable.

II. PROGRESS ON GLOBAL OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA FOR PROTECTION

Support governments in the provision of protection and assistance (Strategic Goal 1)

- Implementation of action points of the Comprehensive Implementation Plan (CIP) adopted at the special OAU/UNHCR experts meeting held in Conakry March 2000 will continue. Particular emphasis will be given to supporting Governments in the adoption of appropriate refugee protection measures (Global objective 1.2). A recent study commissioned by UNHCR and the African Union on national protection capacities in a number of countries in Africa demonstrated several weaknesses that must be addressed. The study will form the basis for specific recommendations to the Member States concerned (*Global objective 10.6*).
- A joint seminar between UNHCR and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights to be held soon will adopt a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at strengthening the monitoring of implementation of the 1969 OAU Convention through the activities of the Commission (*Global objective 10.3, 10.6, Agenda for Protection Goal 1.6.3*).
- UNHCR will also continue its involvement with the African Parliamentary Union to sensitize members of parliament on refugee related issues and stimulate interstate dialogue (*Global objective 1.3, 10.4, 10.6, Agenda for Protection Goal 1.6.3*).
- Efforts will continue to enhance the registration of refugees and revalidation of refugee figures, and to document the refugees accordingly (*Global objective 1.5; Agenda for Protection Goal 1.11.1*). Examples include Guinea and Zambia: refugee identification cards with electronic photos have been issued to camp and urban refugees respectively; Burundi: independent status determination, registration and documentation for refugee women has enhanced the identification of women's specific needs; Kenya: an operational registration database will be established and ID cards will be linked to ration cards. A registration exercise for Angolan refugees, prior to organised voluntary repatriation is underway (*Global objective 3.1; Agenda for Protection Goal 1.11.8*).
- UNHCR will continue to promote the establishment of special camps for former combatants separated from the civilian refugee population, to guarantee the civilian nature and humanitarian character of refugee status and refugee settings (*Agenda for Protection Goal 4.1*). Bokilio military camp in DRC for former combatants from the CAR is an example. In this connection, UNHCR has drafted a recommendation on the treatment of armed elements among refugee populations that will be submitted to the African Union for adoption by the Summit this year (*Agenda for Protection Goal 4.1.2*).
- Rapidly evolving situations in Africa require a strong institutional emergency preparedness and response capacity to plan for and deal with sudden large-scale population movements (Global objectives 1.7, and 8.4). A recent example is that of Côte d'Ivoire, hitherto a relatively stable country praised for its generous asylum policy and hosting thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers. Major political problems since September 2002 have sent thousands of Ivorians fleeing into Guinea, Liberia and Mali. Liberian refugees previously living in Côte d'Ivoire have also fled, returning home despite insecurity in many parts of Liberia.

Improve the physical protection of refugees (Strategic Goal 2)

- Further attempts will be made to increase the number of protection staff in Africa, including community services staff and advisers on refugee women and children (*Global objective 2.4*). UNHCR will further partnership in this area through stand-by arrangements, secondments and capacity-building initiatives (*Global objective 10.3*).

- Increasing problem of xenophobic attitudes towards refugees in several countries in Africa, most recently witnessed with devastating effects in Côte d'Ivoire. This problem is compounded by deteriorating political, economic and social environment in some countries and is resulting in a more introspective and closed approach vis-à-vis refugees and migrants. Increased advocacy and public information campaigns are essential to halt this worrying development. (*Global objective 9.1; Agenda for Protection Goal 1.8.3*).

Assess the protection requirements of refugees and other persons of concern and analyse UNHCR and partner performance in regard to the provision of protection and assistance (*Strategic Goal 3*)

- Improving the quality and standards of protection and assistance for refugees remains the pivotal challenge for Africa, particularly at a time when resource availability for refugee programmes is globally low. A global review process has been initiated to re-validate and refine a core set of quantifiable indicators and standards covering basic areas of concern such as education, food security and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, shelter and protection. The results of this exercise should help measure the relative conditions of refugee populations within and among countries over time (*Global objective 3.2*).
- At the same time, the continuing food shortages and breaks in pipelines currently affecting refugee programmes such as the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya and Southern Africa are seriously impacting the wider protection and assistance of camp-based refugees.

Resolve refugee situations through voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration (*Strategic Goal 4*)

- UNHCR continues to regard voluntary repatriation as the most desirable durable solution and continues to work towards this objective. The Office has at least six active repatriation operations in Africa: the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leoneans from Guinea and from Liberia, the continuing repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan, the repatriation of Somali refugees mainly to North-West Somalia, the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from Zambia, DRC and Namibia which is due to start in May 2003, the repatriation of Rwandese, and a limited operation into some of the more secure parts of Burundi (*Global objective 4.1; Agenda for Protection Goal 5.2*).
- Reintegration of returnees often poses a challenge that cannot be addressed by UNHCR alone. Solid partnerships with a number of actors including Governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies are crucial in order to share responsibilities and agree upon the way forward. The High Commissioner's "4Rs" (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction) strategy is already unfolding in Sierra Leone, Eritrea and North-West Somalia and may be rolled out in Angola this year. If the peace processes are successful in Burundi and DRC, the same approach will be utilised. An integrated and comprehensive approach by all relevant stakeholders should effectively bridge the gap between relief and longer-term development (*Global objective 4.3*).

Strengthen and expand upon local integration possibilities (*Strategic Goal 5*)

- For some groups of refugees, early return home is not an immediate prospect and UNHCR will seek to increase these groups' self-reliance pending return whilst also addressing the needs of their host communities (*Global objective 1.9, 5.4, 7.1, 7.2; Agenda for Protection Goal 5.4*) The High Commissioner's "DLI" (Development through Local Integration) concept: the Zambia Initiative and the Uganda Self Reliance Strategy and the possibilities for other countries will be explored.

Improve resettlement capacities and opportunities (*Strategic Goal 6*)

- The new resettlement management system for Africa aims at ensuring equal access to resettlement for all deserving cases, guaranteeing the integrity of the resettlement process, enhancing the use of resettlement as both a protection tool and a durable solution and, ultimately, making use of resettlement as an instrument for meaningful burden-sharing. Three resettlement hubs are to be established in Accra, Nairobi and Pretoria to ensure improved and increased resettlement processing

in country offices. During 2002, resettlement took place from some 25 countries in sub-Saharan Africa towards some 15 countries in Europe, the Americas and Africa itself (*Global objective 6.4*). A consultative approach involving close collaboration with governments of resettlement countries, IOM and relevant NGOs will be pursued to achieve more accessible and diversified resettlement. The adoption of standard operating procedures should maximize efficiency and transparency.

Enhancing gender-equality and participation (*Strategic Goal 7*)

- The High Commissioner's five commitments to refugee women remain the main guide in enhancing gender-equality and participation. There has been gradual but significant improvement in the participation of women in decision-making, especially with regard to issues affecting their lives. Most offices in Africa undertake on-going sensitisation activities and have established women's committees and centres and progress has been made in many countries with regard to women's participation in general camp management committees. In many countries women are primarily responsible for food distribution management.
- As reported above, individual registration, revalidation and documentation activities have taken place in many programmes in Africa, providing increased security and access to essential services for refugee women. These activities will continue in 2003.
- Individual country plans of action are being implemented to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in refugee camps in Africa (*Global objective 2.2, Agenda for Protection Goal 4.4*). They are aimed at improving monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including increasing dialogue with the refugees, implementing partners and local administrations on the issue, as well as introducing viable measures for preventive and remedial action.
- SGBV workshops and facilitation sessions on the UNHCR Code of Conduct form part of the training schedule for all offices in Africa (*Global objective 7.3, 7.5; Agenda for Protection Goal 4.4.3, 8.14*).
- Most offices in Africa have been providing sanitary products, including soap when available, to refugee women. Some offices have undertaken needs assessments and individual registration for these purposes. All offices have been instructed to use a separate budget line to ensure the systematic provision of sanitary materials to refugee women in camp situations.

In relation to management, strengthen performance and improve the quality of UNHCR's work while exercising austerity in the use of resources (*Strategic Goal 8*)

- The funding shortfall in 2002 was strongly felt across the region in terms of both operations and management. Careful prioritization of activities was required and all field offices were requested to review their programmes. Effective transfers of appropriations were made based on competing needs and levels of implementation. Extensive discussions were also held on how to efficiently manage programmes and raise resources for our activities. Complementary funding sources are currently being examined to maximize resource mobilization (*Global objective 10.5*).
- In an effort to improve the quality of our protection and assistance programmes, regional strategy meetings were held in Accra, Addis Ababa, Dar-Es-Salaam and Pretoria during January and February 2003. These meetings provided an integrated platform for planning, sharing lessons learned, enhancing management, and improving programme delivery and accountability for refugee protection and assistance in the Africa region (*Global objective 8.1, 8.15*).
- Staff safety and security remains a key concern to the Office. To ensure better management of staff safety and security, including early warning and risk assessments, all Offices have been urged to participate in the UN Security Management Team at the country level (*Global objective 10.3*). Field-based Staff Safety Advisors and Staff Welfare Officers conduct security audits to assist in the development of security plans and provide targeted field safety training. However, essential logistical

and communication tools are urgently required in some parts of Africa as part of comprehensive security package.

- The re-structuring of management in the Africa Bureau to provide flexible “situational approaches” to refugee issues in Africa is completed. Two Deputy Directors and three field-based Regional Coordinators for the Great Lakes operations, for the Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugee situations and for the Angolan repatriation operations, continue to assist the Bureau in policy, planning, coordination and management (*Global objective 8.1, and 8.15*).

Partnerships – Build effective partnerships to better protect people of concern and ensure delivery of quality programmes (*Strategic Goal 10*)

- In all aspects of UNHCR’s work, partnerships are crucial. In line with the Global objectives relating to “Advocacy” and “Partnerships”, the Africa Bureau is developing new partnerships and closer working relationships with specialized United Nations agencies and NGOs for sector-specific technical cooperation and resource mobilisation (*Global objective 10.3*). Such partnerships are critical for reintegration activities, the rehabilitation of refugee-impacted areas, the global strategy to combat HIV/AIDS (*Global objective 2.6*), and other thematic humanitarian issues. As an example of innovative partnership, UNHCR took part in the Inter-Agency mission by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) to the United Republic of Tanzania last year to review the situation of refugees and the impact of refugees on the surrounding host communities. Gaps and concerns identified during the mission are being discussed with a larger group of partners, particularly with development actors and line ministries of the Tanzanian Government in order to come up with a plan of action (*Global objective 10.6, 10.7, and 10.8*).
- UNHCR's involvement in discussions on NEPAD and the formulation of the G8 Africa Action Plan adopted during the G8 Summit in June 2002 is one strategic avenue that the Office explored last year. UNHCR has, together with its partners, advocated for the recognition that good governance, peace and security, and conflict resolution are preconditions for sustainable development in Africa as outlined in the preamble of NEPAD. Major donor countries have already been approached by UNHCR to consider establishing development assistance budget lines for countries in transition. Linkages between the priorities of these processes and UNHCR's objectives to find durable solutions for refugees have been established through the EXCOM session of October 2002. The 2003-2004 objective is to translate these priorities into action using the support of African and G8 countries. UNHCR will be closely following the G8 Summit in Evian in June 2003, especially with regard to the pledge made by the G8 group to support war-affected populations and countries hosting large refugee caseloads (*Global objective 9.7, 10.3,10.4, 10.5,10.6, 10.9, 11.7*).
- Building the capacity of NGOs to assist UNHCR and States in carrying out protection and assistance functions continues to be an important objective. It is particularly relevant in countries where UNHCR has limited or no presence (*Global objective 10.2, 10.6*).