

‘Examining, understanding and ensuring delivery’

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

In his opening statement to the Executive Committee on Monday, the High Commissioner underlined the importance of examining and understanding the issue of forced displacement in the contemporary world. During that presentation, Mr. Guterres also reaffirmed his total commitment to ensuring that UNHCR is able to deliver according to its mandate, whether that be in the context of providing protection, assistance or solutions to persons of concern to his Office.

“Examining, understanding and ensuring delivery”. In using those three concepts, I believe that the High Commissioner has captured the very essence of the activities undertaken by UNHCR’s Policy Development and Evaluation Service, or PDES.

When we gathered here for the Executive Committee meeting last year, the Policy Development and Evaluation Service was in its infancy, having been established just one month earlier. The Service was minimally staffed, did not have a consultancy budget, and was yet to establish a work programme. The exact purpose of PDES remained unclear to many members of the Executive Committee. Hence my decision last October to make a presentation that was titled ‘UNHCR’s new Policy Development and Evaluation Service: Some Frequently Asked Questions’.

I sincerely hope that some, if not all, of those questions have been adequately answered by the activities and outputs of PDES over the past 12 months, and which are summarized in the Annual Report which has been made available to you.

As you will see from that report, PDES has taken an integrated approach to its principal functions, bringing the tasks of policy development and evaluation to bear on four of the key issues currently confronting UNHCR and its partners: first, internally displaced people and the challenges of humanitarian action; second, the reintegration of displaced populations and the peacebuilding process; third, the linkage between refugee protection, asylum and international migration; and finally, the protection of refugees and other persons of concern to the Office.

In the interests of time, I will refrain from providing a list of the activities that we have undertaken in each of these areas. Instead, I would like to identify the principal objectives that PDES has pursued over the past 12 months. And I will summarize my comments under six headings: enhanced capacity, increased output, maximum relevance, sustained transparency, stronger cooperation, and improved organizational performance.

In terms of *enhanced capacity*, I am pleased to report that PDES has filled its complement of four Professional posts and one General Service post, and that the three professional staff members who are new to the evaluation function are benefiting from specialized external training. Thanks to the generosity of one Excom member, we will shortly be adding a JPO post to the Service. And as you may have seen from the budget documents provided to you, PDES will benefit from substantial increases in its consultancy budget in both 2008 and 2009.

The enhanced capacity of PDES has already been manifested in the form of *increased output*. During the past year we have completed eight evaluations, including five real-time evaluations of UNHCR's IDP operations, all of which were undertaken between April and July 2007. In addition, we have prepared a series of major policy statements relating to the key themes of the PDES work programme, as well as 15 research papers on issues related to refugees, humanitarian action and migration.

We have strived to ensure that our work is of *maximum relevance* to the needs of UNHCR's beneficiaries and the concerns of senior management. In that respect, the High Commissioner and two Assistant High Commissioners are directly and regularly involved in the formulation of the PDES work programme. As a result, our activities have been tightly focused on a limited number of key operational policy issues.

Our next objective has been that of *sustained transparency*. Our commitment to that goal is manifested in a number of ways: by placing all PDES reports in the public domain, by means of evaluation processes and procedures that safeguard the independence of the function, and by means of the open dialogue that we strive to maintain with Executive Committee members, UN partners and the NGO community. Looking to the future, we will demonstrate our commitment to the highest levels of transparency and professionalism by the introduction of a new UNHCR evaluation policy, which will be based on norms and standards developed by the UN Evaluation Group.

PDES is very conscious of the need to ensure that the quest for independence does not result in isolation, and in that respect, places substantial emphasis on the need for *stronger cooperation* with other stakeholders, both within and outside the Office. The value of this approach has, I believe, been amply demonstrated in recent months.

To give just three examples, PDES has cooperated closely with UNHCR's IDP Advisory Team in the completion of the five Real-Time Evaluations to which I referred earlier. We have worked in partnership with the Community Development, Gender Equality and Children's Section of DIPS in launching an independent evaluation of UNHCR response to the problem of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. And the new UNHCR

Reintegration Policy, which was presented by the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations at a side meeting yesterday morning, has benefited greatly from our cooperation with the Peacebuilding, Livelihoods and Partnerships Section of DOS. Without such interaction, I do not believe that it would be possible for us to promote a culture of evaluation within UNHCR.

The final, most important and overarching objective pursued by PDES is that of *improved organizational performance*. For the work of the Service ultimately stands or falls by the extent to which it supports the High Commissioner in his efforts to bring improved protection, assistance and solutions to persons of concern.

Let me conclude by making some comments on this final objective. I believe that in recent months, PDES has been able to bring a more coherent, consistent and consultative approach to the process of policy development and dissemination in UNHCR, and that the value of this approach will be manifested in more effective programmes, improved partnerships and better resource mobilization.

I feel that we have made significant strides in integrating the evaluation and policy development functions, ensuring that they draw upon and reinforce each other, thereby strengthening both organizational learning and accountability. At the same time, I am aware of the fact that some delegations in this room continue to harbour doubts about the dual mandate that has been given to PDES.

I also consider that we have made some (but certainly not enough) progress in ensuring the effective utilization of evaluation findings and recommendations. We intend to attain this objective by means of directives issued by the Executive Office, that will instruct UNHCR field offices and other parts of the Office to report on their implementation plans and activates. In addition, PDES will continue to make use of the Real-Time Evaluation model, given the significant advantages associated with such timely and interactive reviews. We will also be undertaking evaluations and reviews which are incorporated in broader policymaking and planning processes, and which consequently have in-built follow-up and implementation mechanisms.

In the spirit of transparency to which we are committed, allow me to highlight some of the problems and challenges that we must address if PDES is to contribute more effectively to the delivery of UNHCR's mandate.

First, we have not yet devised a system that will enable us to track and analyse the longer-term implementation of evaluation recommendations, although we expect our new JPO to assist us in that task. Second, the linkage between evaluation and other key functions, most notably results-based management and staff development, needs to be considerably reinforced. Third, as the Inspector-General has already observed, UNHCR lacks the capacity to undertake country programme evaluations of the more conventional type. And fourth, the Policy Development Network referred to in the PDES Annual Report currently exists in only virtual terms and has not yet engaged in any substantive activities.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

We look forward to working with you in the year to come, and would be very interested to hear your views with respect to the further strengthening of the policy development and evaluation function, as well as any specific projects that you would like to propose for the PDES work programme. Copies of that work programme, and copies of this presentation, are available at the back of the room.

Thank you very much for your attention.