



## Joint Press Release

### **UNHCR and IOM strengthen their support to Sudan in combating human trafficking and smuggling**

**KHARTOUM, 17 December 2013** – With the endorsement of the Government of Sudan, UNHCR and IOM have come together to establish a joint Strategy to Address Human Trafficking, Kidnappings and Smuggling of Persons in Sudan. The strategy was developed in close collaboration with the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees and the Ministry of Interior. It seeks to increase the protection of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants at risk of abuse by smugglers and traffickers on the way into, through and out of Sudan. Those most vulnerable are the newly arrived asylum-seekers, mainly of Eritrean origin, who cross the border into Eastern Sudan.

In addition to reducing the number of kidnapping, trafficking and smuggling cases, the strategy focuses on strengthening the capacity of the Government of Sudan to address this phenomenon, providing care and psychosocial support for victims and building awareness of the risks of human trafficking and smuggling among refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants.

In close cooperation with the Sudanese authorities, important actions have already been taken to tackle this problem through a previous joint UNHCR/IOM project, which was implemented between August 2012 and September 2013 with the generous support of the Swiss Government and the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), thus paving the way for an overall anti-trafficking strategy. The budgetary requirements to undertake the planned anti-trafficking and smuggling activities amount to USD 5.5 million. Thanks to generous contributions received from Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States thus far, UNHCR and IOM have been able to immediately start implementing the funded components. However, to ensure continued success, additional support is needed.

To date, capacity-building workshops have been conducted with participants from Sudan's Commissioner for Refugees, the police, national security, civil society, federal ministries, representatives of migrant groups and the judiciary, focusing on refugee law, as well as the protection needs of trafficking victims and vulnerable migrants. With respect to the victims of trafficking, appropriate psychosocial support and legal assistance have been provided when necessary. Awareness-raising sessions on the risks of kidnapping and trafficking are regularly conducted for new arrivals, while a large-scale information campaign targeting camps and urban areas is being prepared.

UNHCR has also enhanced camp security by constructing additional police stations, and has supported the Government of Sudan through the provision of equipment to increase the presence of security personnel in the Shagarab refugee camps. A reception centre was established in Hamdayet in order to provide new arrivals with a safe first point of contact in Sudan.

IOM, jointly with the Directorate for Immigration and Passports, has conducted a border assessment on the main land crossing points into Sudan from Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as at the international airport in Khartoum. The findings from the assessment have also guided the development of the strategy. The assessment's recommendations focus on the necessary foundations to optimize Sudanese migration policy, laws and regulations, as well as operational systems, including improving the security of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants at border points.

Increased commitment by the Sudanese authorities to combat trafficking and prosecute perpetrators, with the support of UNHCR and IOM, has resulted in a sharp drop in reported incidents since early 2013, with 89 cases from January to November 2013, against 324 reported over the same period in 2012.

With the implementation of the strategy and continued positive commitment from the Government of Sudan, risks of human trafficking will be mitigated and a better protection environment for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants will be created. This in turn will further contribute to the decrease in trafficking cases and improve the protection afforded to victims, as well as reduce trafficking-related criminality and generally improve the security situation in Eastern Sudan and Khartoum.

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#### **About UNHCR**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, also known as the UN refugee agency, was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people. In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives.

<http://www.unhcr.org> - @refugees - @refugeesmedia

#### **About IOM**

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 151 member states, a further 12 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants. IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.

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