

**Presentation of Conference Room Paper: Update on education
Introductory remarks by DIP Deputy Director, Preeta Law**

Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, and Partners

It is a pleasure to introduce the Conference Room Paper on Education to this Committee.

UNHCR is committed to expanding and improving partnerships with States, particularly hosting country States, civil society, NGOs, and partners in the private sector to advance our commonly agreed education goals for refugees. Expanding and deepening the collaboration with the range of actors involved in the education response is central to identifying context-relevant, comprehensive and sustainable protection and assistance response that improves the overall protection situation and supports long-term solutions for refugees. Our education goals will flounder if refugee families and communities cannot afford to keep children and youth in school because they have to be the breadwinners, if getting to school involves protection risks, or if schools are not safe or education access is not continuous. A young refugee from Kenya spoke about all this at the higher education side event yesterday in far more compelling ways.

Since the previous report to the 60th session of the Standing Committee in 2014, refugee education has become more prominent across several global initiatives. Sustainable Development Goal 4 explicitly recognizes that the

education needs of forcibly displaced populations must be included in global accountability. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Partnership for Education now collaborate with UNHCR to make refugees visible in global education data and in national education sector plans, so that the work of governments to include refugees in national education systems is recognized, and so that the communities that host refugees are sufficiently supported by sustainable development funding. The Education Financing Commission has raised awareness that education funding and planning that doesn't prioritize the needs of the most at-risk and vulnerable contributes, in the long-term, to instability. Nearly all of the countries receiving funds from Education Cannot Wait are addressing the needs of refugees and vulnerable host community children and youth.

A life without education is a life put on hold, a life of lost hope, human potential and risk. Across UNHCR operations, the first thing that families want to know once they have succeeded in finding safety is: where is the school? How will our children return to school? Many Syrian families who waited two, three or more years to escape the war in their country, finally left so that they could ensure their children's futures were not lost.

Providing quality educational opportunities in refugee contexts means that displaced children and youth can benefit from the protection of an accountable social service in which they have the time, opportunity and support to evolve into key actors in their own protection. Together, the academic and social benefits of education contribute to resilience, staying safe civic participation and leadership. This is particularly the case when emphasis is placed on ensuring the education of girls and young women: numerous studies have demonstrated that educating girls and women is the single most effective strategy to ensure the well-being and health of children, progressive societies and successful economies.

Humanitarian and development collaboration underpinned by international support has, since 2014, resulted in a wide variety of programmes that have had important learning and protection outcomes for all refugees, but especially for children, youth and young adults. For example: 400,000 out-of-school children in 12 countries have been enrolled in primary school. Nearly 143,000 refugee children now access accelerated education programmes that prepare them to mainstream into regular classrooms at the right levels for their ages. Access to secondary education is expanding, including through the construction of three new secondary schools for host and refugee youth in Gambella and Assosa in

Ethiopia as a result of a collaborative proposal submitted to the Education Cannot Wait fund. Both Chad and Ethiopia are among countries that can now track refugee education data that is then used for inclusive educational planning, management, monitoring and reporting by and for the government. These achievements have been made possible by a focus on long-term planning and the financial support to governments that is required to move to implementation.

On the other side of these collaborative achievements are some not so positive statistics: UNHCR estimates that only half of all refugee children are enrolled in primary education and only 1 in 4 access secondary education. 1% of refugees are estimated to be enrolled in higher education courses.

Refugees frequently settle, or are settled, where the most vulnerable host communities also live. The education difficulties refugees face are often shared by those communities. Education responses that address the common needs of both refugees and local children and youth shine a spotlight on these regions or neighborhoods or schools, so that all children benefit from the collaborative attention of both humanitarian and development actors.

The New York Declaration and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework recognize the urgency of realizing the necessary linkages between humanitarian and development actions, particularly in areas like education. Most

refugee families cannot return home in the space of a school year. Most don't have the opportunity to achieve a durable solution for the full duration of the formal school cycle and even longer. Humanitarian education responses that attend to the likelihood of long-term displacement and the need for continued access to local systems right from the start will result in greater attention to the protective benefits of education in addition to essential psychosocial support needs.

The inclusion of refugees in national education systems has been UNHCR's overarching direction for the last few years. Inclusion creates opportunities for effective use of humanitarian funding, so that it can contribute to sustained education opportunities for refugee children, ensure accredited examinations, support investment in existing systems and infrastructure, and foster social cohesion.

The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and UNHCR's shift to multi-year, multi-partner strategy development and planning, which will be operationalized in 22 countries by the end of 2018, are important opportunities for humanitarian and development actions to be better linked for sustainable protection and social services. We are committed to leveraging education partnerships and State commitments made by the global community to support

host countries, so that they in turn can deliver effective and protective education responses in forced displacement contexts.

Thank you.