

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
GENEVA, 6 OCTOBER 2016
KELLY T. CLEMENTS, UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
ITEM 6: REMARKS ON THE BIENNIAL PROGRAMME BUDGET 2016-2017

Mr. Chairperson,

Mr. High Commissioner,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Before presenting UNHCR's revised budgetary requirements for 2016-2017, please allow me to offer some context that affects the resources required to meet the needs of the people we serve.

We are living in troubling times. The High Commissioner's opening remarks on Monday paint an appropriately stark picture of a crisis that has been brewing for decades—a crisis that marked yet another sobering milestone last year. In 2015, the numbers of the forcibly displaced continued to swell to the greatest percentage of the world population in decades—one out of every 113 people. Over 65 million people have been forced from their homes by persecution, armed conflict, or other threats. That is a 50% increase in the preceding 5 years. These are the highest numbers that this Committee has ever seen.

And more importantly, these numbers represent people that have no choice but to rely on the international community for help.

Our duties to them are increasingly complicated by where they find themselves. In many cases, even accessing vulnerable populations is difficult. Half of our field staff brave moderate to extreme threats to their safety on a regular basis. This is a necessary consequence of UNHCR's work, because the people we serve live these dangers themselves on a daily basis. Amidst such turmoil, helping people regain control of their lives—while discharging our duty of care for our colleagues—comes at a cost. Yet, without a qualified and determined field presence, UNHCR simply could not function.

Thus, as you review our budget, I ask you to keep this broader context in mind. Millions of people and their families are counting on us to deliver. And our team can only be as effective as we enable them to be.

86% of refugees are hosted by low- or middle-income countries. These host countries make asylum a reality amidst difficult circumstances, and they deserve our appreciation. They also deserve our support, especially as their infrastructure and social systems provide a global public good that benefits us all. UNHCR's role is often intertwined with broader development initiatives, as exemplified by the core principle of universality of the Sustainable Development Goals. This connection requires longer-term planning and more predictable resources, two pillars of the Grand Bargain between donors and aid agencies.

We are also challenged by the fact that situations of displacement are not being resolved as quickly as new ones begin. Thus, we are called upon to answer ever-shifting humanitarian

emergencies around the globe while continuing to support those trapped in the open-ended limbo of protracted displacement. Last year, we declared 11 emergency situations affecting operations in 30 countries. These declarations marshal an extraordinary response at the country or regional level. We only do this when threats to persons of concern require immediate and exceptional measures in terms of resources and institutional focus.

These complex situations are difficult enough to manage on their own. Confronting nearly a dozen of them simultaneously puts a particular strain on the organisation at a time when UNHCR must be as nimble as ever in response to these volatile situations. For example, we often meet new needs and bolster existing operations' capacity with the emergency deployment of additional personnel on a temporary basis. This can happen where we have already declared a full-blown national or regional emergency, or in any operation that might be overwhelmed by an unexpected turn of events. We were compelled to do this 460 times last year.

Distinguished Delegates,

We can expect that the numbers of the forcibly displaced will continue to rise, at least through 2016.

As in previous years, the budgetary requirements I present to you today are based on UNHCR's Global Needs Assessment, an approach strongly supported by this Committee on multiple occasions. We base these estimates on what needs to be done on behalf of the people we serve—to allow them to 'thrive' rather than just 'survive'—as opposed to the funds we expect to receive. Anything less, we feel, would be failing our duty to speak for those who would otherwise have no formal representation in fora such as this.

Distinguished Delegates,

Without a doubt, these needs are considerable. UNHCR's comprehensive budget for 2016 includes the original annual budget of over USD 6.5 billion, plus some USD 930 million in supplementary budgets established to address subsequent developments regarding: Burundi, Europe, expanded efforts to promote resettlement, Central America's Northern Triangle, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, and Afghanistan. This growth in our budget shows how drastically and quickly things can change in the situations that we are called to address.

Our comprehensive budget for 2016 has reached USD 7.4 billion—the highest we have ever reported. Last week, we had half that amount, USD 3.7 billion, in available funds.

UNHCR remains focused on preserving the right to seek asylum, responding to emergencies, and pursuing solutions in earnest. This is only possible through the generosity of many States, private sector donors, and individuals around the world. Despite this generosity, however, available funding is outpaced by growing humanitarian needs.

We expect a 45% funding gap for the rest of 2016, based on our estimates for the next few months. This shortfall is exacerbated in a number of woefully underfunded operationsProgrammes in Somalia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, for instance, are all struggling to make do with under 20% of the funding they need.

These funding gaps have dramatic consequences for those we serve. They also compromise the long-term impacts of what we do, by hampering our capacity to support refugee self-reliance or cultivate solutions. We urgently request your support in securing enough funding to meet the essential needs of these people.

Distinguished Delegates,

The dramatic underfunding of some operations I just mentioned reflect a larger and persistent concern regarding earmarked contributions. Marshalling sufficient resources for operations across the world is much more difficult when we are compelled to direct funds towards their earmarked targets, regardless of where they are most urgently needed at a particular moment.

I offer our warmest thanks to all our donors for your generosity and your trust, and urge you all to follow the example of those among you:

Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Japan, Denmark, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, France, Germany, and Italy all support UNHCR with unearmarked contributions. Others, such as the United States and Sweden, offer broadly earmarked contributions.

This allows us the greatest flexibility possible to adapt to the monumental tasks before us, and I am encouraged by commitments made in this regard as part of the previously mentioned Grand Bargain.

Our largest source of unearmarked funding is the private sector, including individual donors. This source has grown in recent years, as UNHCR has redoubled efforts to expand income streams. Private sector sources grew over 200% in the four years from 2011-2015, and continues to grow this year. We expect to raise over USD 310 million by the end of 2016. Moving forward, we hope to bring in USD 500 million dollars a year by 2018, and eventually reach one billion by 2026. This 2026 is an ambitious target, given that some agencies have taken twice as long to build up to that level. However, such ambition is necessary given the massive shortfalls we face.

To be clear, our private sector partnerships are about much more than money. They promise a host of other benefits to our work, as the High Commissioner mentioned earlier. They help us engage with the public, leverage technical expertise for innovation, and bolster refugee employment. For these and other reasons, we will continue to explore new ways to cooperate with these valuable partners, including through the Comprehensive Refugee Response.

Distinguished Delegates,

The 2017 proposed budget is just over USD 7.3 billion, representing a slight decrease of approximately USD 123 million when compared to the current 2016 budget.

In this 2017 budget, our operations in Africa account for 32% of the 2017 proposed budget. Operations in the Middle East and North Africa region account for 29.7% of the 2016 proposed budget. Europe accounts for 12.2%, Asia and the Pacific account for 7.5%, and the Americas stands at 2%. These are all roughly similar proportions to the current 2016 budget.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Controller and I were in New York last month to present UNHCR's revised 2016-2017 Budget to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). I

am happy to report that the Committee reported no objections. Among other recommendations, the Committee was particularly supportive of our efforts to build relationships with private sector and individual donors.

Please rest assured that UNHCR will continue to work towards implementing the recommendations contained in the report, as well as taking into consideration the points made during the hearing and the subsequent discussions on the programme budget document. We take their findings seriously and welcome their continued partnership in improving how we operate.

Once again, thank you for your ongoing support and sensitivity to the needs of the people we serve. We count on your generosity as we face the sizable challenges before us in the years to come.