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High Commissioner's Programme**

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Strategic partnerships, including coordination

Summary

This paper reviews key developments in strategic partnerships and coordination since the last report to the sixty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2017. It includes updates on recent institutional restructuring to strengthen UNHCR's strategic partnership approach, and provides examples of the different types of partnerships UNHCR is pursuing. It also discusses UNHCR's ongoing engagement in various inter-agency processes and its operational coordination role.

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I. Introduction

1. In line with the High Commissioner's strategic directions (2017-2021), the Office has striven to expand and strengthen its strategic partnerships over the past year, with the aim of bolstering the effectiveness of the operational response to the needs of persons of concern to UNHCR.

2. Keeping in mind its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,¹ UNHCR adopted more inclusive and forward-looking approaches, with a solutions focus. The Office remained engaged in delivering on its commitments made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit,² including the "grand bargain"³ and the "new way of working" initiative. UNHCR also contributed to the Secretary-General's initiatives on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, and on reforms to the United Nations development system.

3. Over the past year and half, UNHCR has focused its efforts on follow-up to the General Assembly's New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, engaging United Nations partners and a broad range of stakeholders on the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) and on discussions towards a global compact on refugees. Developed as a more inclusive and effective response model, emphasizing joint humanitarian and development action, the CRRF represents a new way of working. It reaffirms the fundamental principles of refugee protection and calls for more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, in support of host governments. Operationalizing the (CRRF) is an organizational priority.

4. In order to operationalize the CRRF, the Office created a task team in 2017, bringing into the organization relevant actors with the expertise required to complement UNHCR's efforts. The CRRF task team in UNHCR includes staff brought in from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, as well as from the community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is also expected to second a staff member on a part-time basis. This allows UNHCR to draw on a broad range of expertise and capacities.

5. Alongside these efforts, the Office is strengthening its capacity in relation to humanitarian and development coordination. In support of this, the UNHCR Headquarters review recommended consolidating partnership management and coordination in the organization. As of 1 February 2018, a reconfigured Partnership and Coordination Service was established and is responsible for relations with humanitarian partners, including NGOs, as well as for steering UNHCR's engagement in inter-agency processes in the humanitarian context. This change aims to ensure that UNHCR approaches partnerships in a strategic and coherent manner, with a focus on operations, and to enable clear direction

¹ UNHCR participates in the steering group on SDG16 (peace, justice and inclusive societies) and co-funds country-level projects to ensure persons of concern to UNHCR are included in the implementation of SDG16 projects. UNHCR also co-chairs the Global Alliance for SDG16, which involves United Nations agencies, States and private sector partners.

² UNHCR reports on the progress made against its commitments on the Agenda for Humanity reporting platform (available from <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/explore-commitments/report-search>) and the grand bargain platform hosted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (available from <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>).

³ Together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and InterAction, UNHCR forms a part of a "grand bargain facilitation group", which is meant to strengthen coordination among the "grand bargain" signatories and the 10 different workstreams.

and leadership.⁴ A new Division of Resilience and Solutions was also established to guide the Office's engagement in pursuing solutions for the forcibly displaced. The CRRF task team and development partnerships will fall under the responsibility of this new division.

II. Strategic partnerships

6. The engagement of a broad range of actors – including those beyond the traditional humanitarian sphere – is critical to mobilizing effective responses and pursuing solutions to forced displacement and statelessness. This requires strengthening existing partnerships and pursuing innovative engagements with other stakeholders. Below are some examples of recent efforts in this area.

A. United Nations system and other international organizations

7. Committed to the United Nations reform agenda and efforts to strengthen the Organization as a whole, UNHCR contributes actively to the Chief Executives Board and its subsidiary bodies: the High-Level Committee on Management, where the Deputy High Commissioner led the initiative on “duty of care”; and the High-Level Committee on Programmes, where it contributed to policy-making on what the United Nations Secretary-General outlines as “frontier issues”, which are related to main challenges emanating from global mega-trends.

8. UNHCR maintains strong ties with its partners in the United Nations system and remains deeply engaged in the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), both in policy-related and operational discussions. It also contributed to the work carried out in support of the prevention and sustaining peace initiative, notably through its participation in the Senior Peace-Building Contact Group.

9. An addendum to the 2011 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) was signed on cash assistance in order to strengthen efficiencies and effectiveness; work is ongoing to elaborate an addendum on data sharing. The two organizations have also developed joint principles for targeting assistance to meet food and other basic needs, and are conducting joint operational research on self-reliance and food security in protracted refugee situations, in support of the CRRF. UNICEF and UNHCR are working closely together on strengthening the inclusion of people of concern in development plans.

10. UNHCR and IOM have enhanced collaboration in the context of mixed movements. The two organizations are working on the development of standard operating procedures to facilitate the identification and protection of victims of trafficking. Close cooperation also continues on solutions for persons under UNHCR's mandate, including on resettlement to third countries.

11. With respect to solutions, UNHCR and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) led an inter-agency team on the “leave no one behind” programming principle to ensure it was reflected in the updated United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) guidance. UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) are working to implement the 2016 MOU between the two organizations, with a focus on analysis, advocacy, programming and doctrine. UNDP and UNHCR conducted a joint review of their partnership in order to identify key strategic areas for common engagement. Efforts have also been made to increase the inclusion of persons of concern in UNDP's rule of law and governance programmes.

⁴ This aligns with globally agreed principles and frameworks, including SDG17 which emphasizes the importance of strengthened partnership and cooperation to achieve the sustainable development goals.

12. UNHCR collaborated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on programming guidance for donors engaged in inclusive institution-building and development activities in displacement and return situations. UNHCR developed a partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) on establishing a joint multi-year facility targeting financial service providers in nine countries in Africa. This initiative promotes access to credit, savings, and financial services and micro-insurance for refugees and host communities. Cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was strengthened through joint agricultural development programmes for refugees, including value chain development for livestock, forage, crops and vegetables, in over 12 countries.

13. UNHCR maintains longstanding collaboration with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Office works closely with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), including as co-lead organizations of the global shelter cluster for internal displacement situations. Strategic discussions are expected to result in a more formalized agreement on a broader range of issues in 2018. UNHCR deepened its collaboration with the ICRC, both on operational and doctrinal issues, building on comparative advantages, expertise and mandates. In 2018, a joint UNHCR-ICRC aide-memoire on the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and IDP camps and settlements will be issued.

B. Non-governmental organizations

14. UNHCR's work with NGOs continued through a series of initiatives. The annual NGO consultations brought together over 500 participants, and NGOs provided valuable inputs to the thematic discussions towards a global compact on refugees and other related discussions. In 2017, UNHCR disbursed \$1.5 billion to over 1,000 partners, including approximately \$1.24 billion to over 800 national and international NGOs.⁵ This represents an increase of \$87 million compared to the previous year. UNHCR is committed to reaching its "grand bargain" target to provide 25 per cent of its programme expenditures to local and national responses which deliver assistance and protection to persons of concern (including national NGOs and government institutions) by 2020; in 2017, UNHCR reached 21 per cent. Some \$699 million (\$670 million in 2016) was provided to 826 local partners, including \$524 million (\$491 million in 2016) to 648 national NGOs. This is the highest number of local partners recorded by UNHCR. The Office continued to strengthen collaboration with its local NGO partners in the areas of communications, capacity-building, joint planning, enhanced use of resources, operational delivery and the prevention of fraud and corruption. Local NGO partners are also participating in a number of initiatives aimed at harmonizing and simplifying processes, which are being undertaken jointly by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP.

15. In the context of the CRRF, UNHCR, the IFRC and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) have created a reference group with NGO networks from all regions. NGOs have been instrumental in implementing the CRRF at the grassroots level and in ensuring that the voices of refugees and local stakeholders are heard and that their views are reflected in all activities.

C. Financial institutions

16. UNHCR and the World Bank undertook 11 joint missions in 2017 to support the World Bank International Development Assistance (IDA) 2018-2020 refugee and host community sub-window. Following a review by the World Bank's Board of Executive

⁵ These figures, as of 14 February 2018, are provisional, as the closure of the 2017 accounts is still in progress.

Directors in September 2017, eight countries⁶ are now eligible to access financing. Collectively, these eight countries host 4.1 million refugees. UNHCR was invited to be an observer to the Steering Committee Meetings of the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) in April 2017. The GCFF was established to provide concessional financing to middle income countries affected by large movements of refugees. Its aim is to raise \$6 billion in concessional lending by attracting donor grant financing of approximately \$1.5 billion over the next three years. The grant portion allows interest rates to be lowered to concessional levels. To date, in just over 12 months of formal operation, the GCFF has mobilized \$400 million, supporting projects with concessional financing to the value of over \$1 billion.

17. In October 2017, the World Bank Group and UNHCR decided to establish a Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement. The data centre will cover all persons of concern to UNHCR and the communities hosting them, with the following objectives: (i) ensuring population and socioeconomic data are systematically collected and analysed; (ii) facilitating open access to forced displacement data, with adequate anonymization and safeguards to ensure the integrity of the legal protection framework; (iii) promoting innovation to enhance forced displacement data; and (iv) strengthening the sustainability of a global data collection system, based on common norms, definitions and methodologies, with a particular focus on strengthening country systems where necessary.

18. In 2017, UNHCR strengthened its collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), focusing on support to UNHCR projects in Cameroon, Niger and Zimbabwe. UNHCR and the AfDB also signed a new joint fiduciary principles agreement in December 2017, which provides an overall framework agreement that will apply to current and future contributions from AfDB to UNHCR.

D. The private sector

19. Private sector partners not only make vital financial contributions to UNHCR, but are also key collaborators in developing innovative and cost-effective solutions for persons of concern. Non-financial contributions are varied and include in-kind contributions, expertise, pro-bono support, access to networks and centres of influence, and advocacy efforts. Notable contributions in 2017 included the Vodafone Foundation's work with UNHCR on connected learning activities, such as an "instant network schools" programme currently being implemented in several operations in Africa. UNHCR's long standing strategic partnership with the Japanese clothing apparel company UNIQLO has led to in-kind donations of nearly 5 million pieces of clothing for persons of concern in 16 countries, the financing of livelihoods and skills training programmes across Asia, and jobs for refugees in Germany, Japan and Malaysia.

20. UNHCR's #WithRefugees campaign continued to mobilize global solidarity and support for the refugee cause. It has helped the Office engage new supporters through a petition and reach new audiences of support through the campaign's #WithRefugees coalition. With 1.86 million signatures to date, the campaign petition encourages leaders and other stakeholders to ensure every refugee child has an education; every refugee family has somewhere safe to live; and that every refugee can work or learn new skills to support their families. Over 300 members of the #WithRefugees coalition have committed to supporting the campaign and taking concrete action on behalf of refugees. The coalition includes representatives of companies from an array of sectors, faith-based organizations, universities, sports federations, labour unions, NGOs and foundations.

⁶ Cameroon, Chad, the Congo (Republic of), Djibouti, Ethiopia, Niger, Pakistan and Uganda.

III. Coordination

A. Refugee response

21. UNHCR continued to strengthen coordination in refugee situations and explore ways to bring in development actors to support early responses. With this in mind, technical guidance and capacity-building initiatives were developed for UNHCR staff, partners and host government representatives working together in line with the refugee coordination model (RCM). Taking into account feedback and lessons learned, UNHCR revised and updated learning programmes and trainings for its workforce and partners. Over 200 staff, partners and government officials participated in coordination training. Ways to strengthen partnerships and coordination in refugee responses were also discussed in high-level bilateral meetings with IOM, OCHA, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP and other partners.

22. Consistent with the RCM, UNHCR continued to work on joint regional planning and analysis and on national protection and solutions strategies developed under the leadership of Regional Refugee Coordinators. In 2017, UNHCR issued five⁷ regional refugee response plans, covering 19 countries. These plans were initiated by UNHCR and developed in partnership with host governments, United Nations partners, international NGOs and local first responders. Regional Refugee Coordinators, responsible for leading operational coordination, planning and resource mobilization, were appointed for the Burundi situation and the South Sudan emergency, while the tenures of the Regional Refugee Coordinators covering the Nigeria and Syria situations were extended. A contingency planning exercise for the Democratic Republic of the Congo was undertaken, with a view to enhancing preparedness for the activation of a regional refugee response plan in 2018.

23. Within these refugee response plans, host governments and UNHCR jointly coordinated the work of nearly 700 partners, with a combined budget of over \$3.6 billion, representing 55 per cent of all requirements identified by UNHCR and its partners. Of the \$3.6 billion raised, approximately \$2.38 billion was allocated to partners, while \$1.27 billion was earmarked by donors for UNHCR. To ensure coordination for the refugee response, as well as to lay the groundwork for more long-term investments and development initiatives in line with the CRRF, more funding will be required for partners in underfunded humanitarian situations, such as the Burundi refugee situation.

B. Internal displacement

24. UNHCR's strategic directions for 2017-2021 stress that IDPs should form an integral part of the Office's response efforts. In 2017, UNHCR reviewed its own engagement in IDP situations, with a view to: (i) identifying key challenges and opportunities in expanding its coordination responsibilities and in planning and implementing activities for IDPs; and (ii) developing recommendations to help ensure that UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations is more predictable, coherent, effective and sustainable. The recommendations from this internal review are now being implemented, and at the same time, UNHCR is working with OCHA and other partners on ways to highlight the issue of internal displacement in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of the "Guiding principles on internal displacement".

25. UNHCR is an active partner on internal displacement in the IASC, where it continues to lead the global protection cluster (GPC) and co-lead the global shelter cluster and the global camp coordination and camp management cluster (CCCM). In 2017, the

⁷ These regional refugee response plans cover the Burundi situation, Nigeria situation and the South Sudan situation, and also include the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in response to the Syria crisis (Syria 3RP) and the regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe.

GPC worked on drawing attention to the causes and consequences of violations of international humanitarian law in situations of hunger and how the humanitarian response has too narrowly focused on food security and nutrition in places such as Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. The GPC also issued an alert on the situation in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2017, 12 field missions in support of 9 countries were undertaken by the GPC. Out of 35 field protection clusters and other mechanisms, UNHCR leads 25. It co-leads several clusters with NGOs, as well as with national institutions, such as the Nigerian Human Rights Commission. The GPC continued to take forward a number of innovation initiatives by strengthening links with research institutions and other relevant actors, and is currently working on developing a protection innovation lab in 2018.

26. In regards to the global shelter cluster, which is co-led by UNHCR and IFRC, UNHCR led (or co-lead) 12 of the 27 active country-level shelter clusters, responding to the needs of approximately 6 million persons of concern through the coordinated efforts of some 400 partners and a combined budget of \$250 million. Following the declaration of an IASC level-3 emergency⁸ in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in October 2017, UNHCR increased its operational and coordination capacity in support of shelter responses to provide surge support to the national shelter cluster, while technical experts were deployed to surrounding countries of asylum (Angola and Zambia) to strengthen response capacity.

27. The global CCCM cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, supported 15 country-level clusters and cluster-like structures in 2017, with UNHCR leading or co-leading 10 of them. Several partnerships with international NGOs to co-facilitate the cluster at the country or sub-national levels were not continued (including in Iraq, Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic), mainly due to funding shortfalls faced by the NGOs involved. In 2017, nine field missions in support of six countries were undertaken by UNHCR, including to activate the CCCM cluster in Somalia. The strategic advisory group of the global CCCM cluster has been renewed with ACTED, the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Lutheran World Federation participating as strategic advisory group members.

⁸ In the context of the IASC, a level-3 emergency is typically a sudden-onset complex emergency requiring the activation of a system-wide response, with agreed mechanisms, tools and procedures.