

Global Programmes, Inclusion and Resilience

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Remarks by the Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions,

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Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to update you on UNHCR's global programmes. Given the wide range of areas covered by the global programmes my intervention today will focus on some additional elements to complement our conference room paper.

Let me start by putting the delivery of our global programmes into context.

By mid-2021, there were about 3.7 million more refugees under UNHCR's mandate than in 2016, the year of the adoption of the New York Declaration. The majority are hosted by low- and middle-income countries. A growing number of refugees and other persons of concern find themselves in protracted and long-lasting displacement situations and only a small percentage of those are realizing durable solutions.

As solutions remain elusive, we are increasingly making efforts with host governments, bilateral and multilateral development partners to expand opportunities for inclusion, self-reliance and resilience, which not only enable the forcibly displaced and their host communities to live more dignified lives, but also contribute to the development of local economies and markets, lead to better services in remote areas, and support social cohesion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Data from the World Bank-UNHCR High Frequency Phone Surveys and the World Bank/UNHCR Joint Data Centre shows that the socioeconomic wellbeing of forcibly displaced persons deteriorated during the pandemic. COVID-19 also caused significant setbacks in health access, education, wages and employment, and food security. UNHCR's Education Report – released in 2021 – indicated that nearly half of refugee children are out of school. Participation rates at the primary, secondary, and tertiary education levels for refugee children are lower than their non-refugee peers. While COVID-19 disrupted education for all learners, it had an acute effect on displaced learners who were already facing unique obstacles in accessing, staying in, and completing education prior to the pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) outlines a multi-stakeholder approach to better respond to refugee situations, while promoting self-reliance and easing the burden on host communities. To achieve these aims and to effectively respond to the pandemic, UNHCR has been further strengthening its partnerships with major development actors and multilateral development banks.

The partnership with the World Bank continued to thrive through close cooperation on policy, data, evidence and analytics, knowledge management and human resource development, and has opened opportunities beyond the WB's dedicated windows on refugees and host communities.

We are also making significant progress in strengthening our collaboration with regional development banks. For example, UNHCR has engaged in the consultations with the African Development Bank's new Strategy on Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa to ensure that forced displacement features as a priority cross-cutting theme.

Similarly, we have seen tremendous developments in our partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in just 12 months; from having a deep dive with the IADB at the beginning of 2021 on identifying areas of collaboration to signing an MoU on our partnership in December. Building on this, UNHCR is working with the IADB on developing a joint action plan to clearly articulate concrete collaboration as we move forward.

Existing partnerships with bilateral development actors, such as AFD, BMZ, Denmark, the Netherlands, INTPA, JICA and Luxembourg, were deepened in 2021 and further systematized both at the global as well as the country level. New partnerships with Enabel, Norad and the development arm of SIDA were initiated. These collaborations are producing tangible results, ensuring much-needed predictability and consistency in development support to countries and regions affected by forced displacement.

UNHCR's partnership with the IFC has seen promising developments and has the potential to significantly mobilize the private sector for strengthened investments in forced-displacement-related programmes. A joint IFC-UNHCR centre aimed at creating markets in forced displacement contexts by mobilizing private sector solutions will be launched this year.

UNHCR recently adhered to the OECD/DAC Recommendation on improving programming, finance and coordination in the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. Complementary to this nexus is UNHCR's longstanding engagement with UNDP and I am pleased to highlight the revitalized Joint Global Initiative between UNHCR and UNDP, which aims to strengthen cooperation between the two organizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2021, two innovative funding mechanisms were launched - the Refugee Environmental Protection (REP) fund and the Project Flow initiative. The REP fund aims to address the lack of clean and safe cooking fuel and the resulting widespread deforestation. Project Flow will convert the energy source of water boreholes from diesel to solar power by 2030. We also remain committed to achieving the Clean Energy Challenge. These initiatives are part of the Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability.

In 2021, the response to the pandemic continued to demand considerable attention and focused on prevention through the delivery of personal protective equipment, risk communication and community engagement, as well as improving access to COVID-19 testing and treatment. UNHCR supported the strengthening of national health systems, including by establishing quarantine and treatment centres, increasing intensive care and testing capacity. These efforts benefit the displaced and host communities alike.

We are very encouraged to see that 162 refugee hosting countries have included refugees into their national COVID vaccine plans. Vaccine inequity, however, remains a serious concern. Only less than 5 per cent of adults are fully vaccinated in low-income countries, compared to about 58 per cent in advanced economies.

Turning to education, UNHCR has advocated for and ensured the inclusion of refugees in COVID-19 national education response plans. This is essential in ensuring that refugee children are not left behind and the pandemic does not further deepen existing education inequalities faced by refugee learners. UNHCR is working towards harnessing Connected Education to ensure all forcibly displaced learners, and the communities that host them, benefit from today's digital landscape. UNHCR's flagship partnership with Vodafone Foundation, through the Instant Network Schools, has scaled to support over 139,000 students with access to high quality learning through a holistic digital intervention. At the end of 2021, UNHCR also launched the Refugee Connected Education Challenge, calling on governments and partners to make concrete commitments to help narrow the growing digital divide faced by displaced learners.

In 2020 and 2021, UNHCR carried out four studies on inclusion in social protection systems, which illustrated that transitioning from assistance to inclusion in social protection systems supports protection.

UNHCR expanded its operational collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) at country and global levels, including through the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. The Joint Hub team is helping UNHCR-WFP country offices with strategic support. The joint UNHCR-WFP Call to Action strives to develop country specific investment cases with governments and partners for achieving sustainable food security and socio-economic inclusion.

Cash remains an efficient tool when responding to immediate lifesaving needs, and when fostering resilience and unlocking the potential for sustainable inclusion for persons of concern. In 2021, UNHCR delivered some USD 670 million in over 100 countries. Out of the 10.7 million recipients of cash assistance, 51 per cent are women. In tandem with expanded cash delivery, UNHCR, recognizing financial inclusion as an enabler for livelihood and self-reliance, exerted efforts to increase opportunities for displaced persons to access financial services that meet their needs in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you have heard in the regional updates, the global situation remains precarious, resulting in increased displacement across the world. The pandemic has created additional challenges for the forcibly displaced, exposing them to new health, protection and economic threats. Our global programmes to support our Regional Bureaus and country operations have contributed to mitigating consequences on our persons of concern, strengthening their resilience and encouraging their inclusion in national systems.

Thank you for your continued support to UNHCR's work.