

Presentation by the Director, Division of Emergency, Security and Supply

Agenda item 6 (c) Emergency preparedness and response

Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

1. Thank you for this opportunity to update you on what we accomplished together in 2018 through our collective efforts to effectively respond to emergencies.

I will begin this update with the global context in 2018.

2. To monitor and strengthen its **preparedness status** globally, UNHCR relied on the **dynamic early warning, risk monitoring, analysis and preparedness system**. The organization used this platform throughout 2018 to proactively assess and analyze risks as well as support operations to develop a sufficient level of preparedness. Operations were added and removed from the global watch list based on rigorous risk analysis and upon successful implementation of appropriate preparedness actions.

3. As a result, UNHCR issued nearly 30 early warning alerts and operational advisories in 2018, a downward trend as compared to 2017. Operations assessed to be at medium-to-high risk of an emergency were included on the **global watch list** for heightened institutional attention and support to boost preparedness and capacity. Of the 77 operations that featured on the 2018 watch list, **the majority (60%) were partially prepared** for an emergency, 20% were sufficiently prepared, and **some 10% were insufficiently prepared**. Insufficient-to-partial preparedness automatically triggered institution-wide follow-up and investments to boost preparedness and capacity to acceptable levels prior to the onset of the emergency.

4. 2018 was a particularly challenging year in forced displacement emergencies globally, impacting 30 million children, women and men in 23 countries. **By the end of 2018, five new situations had been declared emergencies:** Cameroon, Central America and Mexico, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Venezuela. In addition to responding to the five new emergency situations, UNHCR and partners continued their efforts to support **pre-existing emergency situations in Bangladesh, Libya, Nigeria, Syria and Yemen. These 10 emergency situations of 2018**, with their different operational contexts, specific displacement dynamics and

support requirements tested an overextended global emergency preparedness and response system.

5. To address the growing demand for strengthened emergency leadership and coordination from operations, UNHCR reinforced its Emergency Management Team in 2018 with skilled and dedicated IDP emergency first responders. As a result, the Organization was able to respond rapidly to multiple requests for emergency leadership and coordination, for example in Ethiopia and Iraq.

6. **Partnerships** contributed significantly to the quality, effectiveness and impact of emergency responses. For the 27th year, standby partnerships continued to generously provide valuable supplementary expert surge capacity to fill unmet critical needs in refugee and IDP emergency operations. To optimize UNHCR's strategic standby partnerships, NRC and UNHCR co-chaired the 2018 Annual consultations of Emergency Standby partners. The event sparked critical reflection and consensus on practical ways the operational partnerships could deliver more value to future emergency responses. Without the tangible contributions and fruitful collaboration of standby partners, UNHCR alone would not have been as effective, efficient and timely in satisfying the demand for emergency services and solutions. UNHCR is thus grateful to its partners for the valuable support.

7. In reference to UNHCR's commitments under **the Grand Bargain**, the number of national partners in emergency operations increased from 215 in 2017 to 239 in 2018.

8. To enhance the effectiveness of **partnerships in emergency operations**, UNHCR trained another 1,200 colleagues, government, national and regional partners in emergency management and leadership in 2018. In **Latin America**, for example, to support the region's efforts to respond to the evolving crises, UNHCR conducted an Emergency Team Leadership training for Spanish-speaking senior humanitarian professionals in Bogota, Colombia on behalf of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). To reach an even wider global audience, UNHCR translated the online version of its Emergency Handbook into three additional languages: **Arabic, French and Spanish**.

9. In 2018, Germany, Norway and Senegal provided training facilities and technical support to UNHCR's emergency training programmes. Japan contributed financially to the management and operations of UNHCR's Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness in Bangkok (eCentre). UNHCR wishes to thank the above Member States for their continued financial and technical support and valued partnership.

10. To enhance coordinated action and synergies at the inter-agency level, UNHCR pursued its collaboration with the IASC Emergency Directors' Group and UNDP's early warning and preparedness team. UNHCR also actively participated in the discussions leading to the endorsement of the IASC Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Protocols in November 2018. UNHCR is committed to their implementation in collaboration with IASC members.

11. To conclude **on partnerships**, I would like to share some initial thoughts on how our two flagship initiatives, specifically our organizational transformation and the Global Compact on Refugees, are likely to shape future partnership choices in emergencies. In operational contexts conducive to innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships and comprehensive responses, UNHCR will pursue partnerships that empower and promote inclusive, resilient and sustainable approaches. Practically, this entails reaching out to and working effectively with traditional and non-traditional partners that are the best-fit and offer the best value in specific operational environments.

12. Therefore, **partnerships being key to comprehensive, resilient and sustainable solutions**, UNHCR aims to collaborate with actors who commit to

invest in area-based solutions built on integrated multi-stakeholder approaches, and advance local capacity development in their emergency response plans.

A few words on the Security Environment.

13. Some emergency situations were characterized by violence, civil unrest, criminality and disregard for civilian life, with affected communities exposed to the greater risks.

14. Thanks to the proactive joint efforts, good cooperation and the rapid action of authorities on the ground, the worst was avoided in a number of very close calls. We managed - with your support - to continue courageously serving and effectively responding to situations fraught with challenges. UNHCR is appreciative of the extraordinary cooperation of the governments and local communities across the world.

The next area I wish to update you on is the Operationalization of UNHCR's 2017 Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response.

15. 2018 marked the first full year of implementation of UNHCR's 2017 Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response.

16. The first phase of the implementation of the Policy taught us three important lessons:

Lesson One- The requirement for a more predictable and robust corporate response to IDP emergencies;

Lesson Two- The value of credible quality data, knowledge and information management capabilities in emergency operations from the onset in enabling the cooperation and support of key stakeholders; and,

Lesson Three- Depending on the operational context, build on the GCR and CRRF to do things differently and to do them better in partnership with development, private and civil sector actors to improve the prospects for effective protection in host areas by supporting resilience and sustainable development.

Your valuable leadership and timely support is key in enabling more predictable, evidence-based, cost-effective and resilient refugee and IDP emergency responses.

Chair,

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17. Allow me to conclude my remarks with highlights on 2019 strategic priorities:

I. **The first is to make an impact from day one** in refugee and IDP emergencies by delivering timely, appropriate and cost-effective emergency solutions in cooperation with member states and partners;

II. **The second is to invest in diverse, multi-stakeholder operational partnerships and integrated approaches** to enhance operations' preparedness, capacities and resilience to emergencies;

III. **The third is to improve data quality, information management and strategic communications in emergency contexts** by effectively leveraging our technical partners' comparative operational strengths; and

IV. **The fourth is to pursue the implementation of the 2017 Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response**, incorporating evidence-based lessons from 2018.

To succeed, we will turn to you distinguished members of the Executive Committee for your valuable support and cooperation. You can count on UNHCR's enduring commitments to be more responsive to global emergencies.

Thank you for this opportunity, your time and attention.