

Remarks for the 76th Standing Committee meeting
Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
Kelly T. Clements, Deputy High Commissioner
Room A, WIPO
18-19 September 2019

Mister Chairperson,
Excellencies,

In the interest of time, I will limit these remarks to the broader management of the organization and my colleagues will introduce the specifics of each agenda item.

You are all familiar with the context in which UNHCR operates. In short, we continue to protect and pursue solutions for now 74.8 million forcibly displaced people, returnees and stateless persons of concern to the Organisation. An increasing number of people for which to care in an operational context which is becoming increasingly complex

I witnessed this first-hand a few weeks ago, in a visit to Tripoli, Libya where our colleagues and dynamic partners respond in dangerous conditions to the needs of three quarters of a million people in spite of ongoing armed conflict and political instability which are continuing to drive displacement and humanitarian needs upwards. We work around rapidly shifting front lines, which sometimes impede our ability to reach and deliver aid to people in need, which is further compounded by limited funding – with only half of identified needs met. But despite this, we have reached thousands in Libya in recent years, and continue to provide lifesaving and life-sustaining aid to thousands more.

Many among our 17,000 strong workforce operate in such environments, with 37 per cent of us based in hardship duty stations, away from family and facing the daily challenges of operating in insecure and high risk environments. Duty of care to our personnel is a high priority for the organisation. We have taken steps to better support and equip our team in these locations, introducing Administrative Instructions on Measures in Support of Personnel in High Risk Duty Stations last year and leading the UN task force on duty of care since 2017. By taking care of our people we better serve others.

Currently, we are working to cement gains of this task force as part of the UN system's Occupational Safety, Health and Security. The task force has accomplished much, setting standards and identifying tools for personnel in high-risk duty stations; developing a risk management framework to guide our approach; launching the Mental Health Strategy, and; drafting Core Principles to guide the UN system in all environments and a framework to enhance support for our flexible workforce, which continue to be key members of the team, working side by side to protect and aid.

So, as we transition our work on Duty of Care in the broader UN system, we remain committed to ensuring that UNHCR discharges its own responsibility towards our workforce, aiming to build a better employee experience at UNHCR. The ongoing Human Resources transformation in UNHCR, which Catty Bennett Sattler, the Director of the Human Resources Division, will address under item two is a key element of our overall reform process. This will enable the Division to be at the center of UNHCR's new way of working. Stronger partnerships with operations, managers and the workforce itself and an increased focus on people management will be critical to our future success.

This, together with the ongoing regionalisation and decentralisation, forms part of a broader set of reforms which we will discuss under item two of this meeting's agenda. I will not detail these now,

as we will discuss them later in the meeting, but have spoken about many of these individual streams of work in past meetings of this Committee, as have my colleagues heading various Divisions and Services, such as Risk Management. The presentation of these different initiatives into a single reform is, I realise, a novel way for us to present the transformation of the agency to ensure that we are better able to discharge the High Commissioner's mandate, and seize opportunities as and when they arise.

These are dynamic times for the organisation, with a number of far reaching reforms underway, each tackling complex matters that cut deep into the way in which we operate to deliver better protection and solutions to the people we serve. Our work towards building a decentralised and regionalised modus operandi for the organisation would have been self-defeating had we not considered the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, or the likely impact of UN reforms on our collaboration with sister agencies in the field. Similarly, it would have been foolish to believe that our results-based management system can be overhauled in a vacuum, without considering the manner in which we collect, analyse, and utilise data in the organisation.

It is for that reason that we have worked in recent months to bring together these various strands of the transformation, under the umbrella of a governance board which I announced at the previous meeting of this Committee, to track progress across the various workstreams of our change process and; facilitate decision-making on cross-cutting issues, and; effect course corrections when and where needed. In this, as in many other initiatives, we have benefitted from the sage advice of the members of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC)...more on that to follow.

One of the cross-cutting themes of the transformation, and one of the more advanced workstreams, is Risk Management, an essential approach given the environments in which we operate, and our need to put in place safeguards to ensure the integrity of those operations. The Risk Management 2.0 initiative launched by the High Commissioner in late 2017 invests in our risk management culture and approach, revamps the organisation's Strategic Risk Register and updates our Enterprise Risk Management Policy to align this with our new organisational structure and direction and remain fully consistent with recently revised ISO 31000 standards.

We have also worked to set the tone from the top, with clear and ongoing messaging from the High Commissioner and others in the Senior Executive Team emphasising the importance of our organisation's integrity. And we have backed up these words with a range of actions, including the creation of a Speak Up Helpline allowing all personnel to report concerns confidentially; the rolling out of an active bystander campaign and revamping the manner in which the annual code of conduct sessions are conducted, and; making training on 'fraud and corruption awareness' mandatory and available in multiple languages for greater impact.

You will get a snapshot of these activities under item 2, where Diane Goodman, the Senior Coordinator on addressing Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Sexual Harassment, will detail some of the work she and an extended UNHCR team have done to ensure our vision of providing a trusted, respectful and inclusive environment where the people UNHCR serves and those who work for the organisation feel safe, heard, equipped and empowered to speak up for themselves and others and are able to take robust and visible action, as appropriate, with the aim of eradicating sexual misconduct.

I have spoken in past meetings of reforms brought to our suite of oversight bodies starting with a review of these conducted in 2016. These reforms continue today to integrate better the internal audit function within UNHCR and improve the interface between UNHCR's management and oversight functions through strategic oversight meetings engaging the entire Senior Management

Committee. Our work this year had focussed on consolidating gains from these reforms, working to ensure greater proactivity in the way managers address weaknesses identified through internal audits, and reinforcing follow-up to findings and recommendations which cannot be addressed by the time of the close of the audit process. We continue to brief you regularly on our progress on and challenges to implementing some of the recommendations.

We collaborate closely with the UN Board of Auditors (BOA) and welcome their recommendations and guidance to improve UNHCR's control framework and the effectiveness of the organisation. As you will have noted, the Board concluded, following its examination of financial statements prepared for the year, that these fairly presented, in all material aspects, UNHCR's financial position and its financial performance and cash flows for the year.

UNHCR continues to address the weaknesses and areas for improvement identified by the BOA and, as of April of this year, had closed 52 per cent of the recommendations issued by the BOA for 2017 and previous years while noting continuing progress in implementing the outstanding recommendations. The BOA further articulated recommendations in a number of important areas of our work, including as concerns UNHCR's transformation, internal control framework, and provision of cash assistance to beneficiaries.

Insights provided by the BOA are critical to ensuring we improve the organisation's control framework while improving the effectiveness of our delivery of protection and solutions for people we serve. It is our aim and hope, as we reconfigure substantial elements of the organisation and review the way in which we work, that we will enhance the organisation's ability to follow-up on these recommendations, and become more light-footed in our response to these.

Finally, I noted earlier the important advice we have received from members of the IAOC on the change process. This is a small component of the work of the committee this year which you will hear more about from Ms, Lynn Haight, the Chairperson of the Committee and its longest-standing member. Ms. Haight will soon be ending her second term on the Committee and I would like to thank her, on behalf of the High Commissioner, for the work she had done since 2013 to assist us in exercising our oversight responsibilities. We have had many spirited exchanges over the years, and her work with the committee has laid a strong foundation upon which current members can build.

Mister Chairperson,

UNHCR saw substantial growth in this decade, with the number of displaced people doubling in the five-year period between 2012 and 2017, our budget growing by close to 90 per cent and our workforce by 50 per cent. That and our concerted efforts to encourage a "speak up" culture, it is therefore no surprise that UNHCR saw a substantial increase in complaints received by its Inspector General in recent years. Predictably, this increase in complaints has also resulted in an increase in investigations completed and disciplinary and administrative measures imposed.

By the end of August of this year, the High Commissioner had imposed 20 disciplinary measures, and another 9 administrative measures were imposed by the Director of DHR. This against the 21 disciplinary sanctions imposed in 2017 and the 35 imposed in 2018. Of sanctions imposed so far this year, 14 staff were separated from service or dismissed, and a further 4 affiliated workforce personnel saw their contracts terminated.

Importantly, personnel who are dismissed as the result of disciplinary proceedings, or resign prior to the conclusion of these proceedings, are ineligible for re-employment with UNHCR. Information about such former personnel who have engaged in sexual exploitation and abuse and/or who were

dismissed for sexual harassment is included in a 'clear check' tracker, a secure online database that allows United Nations entities to share information on such personnel to prevent their re-hiring by other entities. The UN's High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) is also conducting a feasibility study into expansion of this database to include other types of misconduct and other (non-UN) partners.

Beyond the additional investments which we have made to professionalise and strengthen the Inspector General's Office and the other bodies engaged in the investigation and disciplinary processes, we have also laid the groundwork necessary to enable the position of Inspector General to be competed externally, with the new Inspector General to serve under a time-limited mandate. These steps are well underway and a widely advertised selection process is currently ongoing.

As we work to reinforce the integrity of our operations, and our organisation, we are reminded that we share risks with partners in the field, and must work together to better manage these. To this effect, we have introduced, in June of this year, a new policy of contributions towards partner integrity capacity and support costs, which now comprise a contribution of 4 per cent for national partner programme support costs, as well as greater discretion in the way in which partners can make use of this additional resource.

This new contribution to national partners is one of the many expressions of UNHCR's commitment to pursue the goals of the Grand Bargain. Dominique Hyde, the Director of the Division of External Relations, will be updating you on these efforts under item five of our agenda.

Beyond our commitments to the Grand Bargain, there is much that UNHCR can do to become a better partner. We have, over the last year, been engaged in constructive conversations with a number of NGO partners and consortia and are working to address their concerns. This includes ensuring that all project partnership agreements are signed in a timely manner and that all possible avenues for multi-year agreements are explored. Regarding multi-year agreements, despite the relative lack of multi-year funding (which represented less than 7 per cent of our total income in 2018), we are taking calculated risks with select partners and signing multi-year agreements on the strength of funding projected for future years. This is a less than ideal manner in which to enter into multi-year agreements, and will have to be monitored to ensure we do not expose ourselves to undue financial risk, but it reflects our commitment to being a more predictable partner.

These are but some of the challenges we face as we continue our work to reform the organization, while responding to the needs of a growing number of forcibly displaced people across the globe. Those needs remain significant and are reflected in our 2019 budget which, from an initially approved US\$ 8.5 billion, now stands at US\$ 8.6 billion since the inclusion of two supplementary budgets to meet needs arising from the Cameroon and Venezuela situations totalling US\$ 107 million and a budget reduction of US\$ 62 million in Uganda following the downwards reduction of population planning figures for the year.

You have now received and reviewed our proposed budget for the coming biennium which we were only able to present to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) yesterday, and this due to scheduling challenges on their end, combined with our desire to maintain consultations with you over the summer, rather than accelerate the proposed budget's submission to allow for its consideration by the ACABQ before their summer recess. This budget reflects comprehensive needs and the most likely scenarios regarding refugees and forced displacement worldwide.

As you know, our current Global Needs Assessment-based budgeting was first introduced in the 2010-2011 programme budget to allow us to fundraise for the comprehensive range of protection and aid. Unfortunately, we continue to face a significant funding gap which, with current estimates, stands at US\$ 3.9 billion, close to half of our total budget. These factors jeopardise our ability to meet displaced populations' critical needs and continue to force us to make difficult choices. This affects not only the people we serve but also the countries and communities hosting them. The process we go through to prioritise resources was presented at an Informal Consultative Meeting last month and continues our efforts to portray transparently to you the tough choices we make daily.

With needs remaining high, and the funding gap an unfortunately constant feature, we continue to diversify our funding sources. You are familiar with the investment which the organisation has made in fundraising from the private sector in previous years, increasing income from just over US\$ 70 million in 2010 to US\$ 423 million in 2018. We remain committed to this approach and are on track to raising US\$ 470 million this year and, ultimately, to reaching our target of USD 1 billion in revenue from private sector sources by 2025.

The high levels of funding your governments and the private sector continue to provide us reflects the considerable confidence you have in UNHCR. We are most grateful for this and committed to ensuring that UNHCR is best suited to meet the needs of refugees and displaced populations, both today and in the future.

Thank you for your steadfast support.