**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

**Standing Committee
55th meeting**

Update on coordination issues: strategic partnerships

Contents

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I.   Introduction

1.   This year has seen a proliferation of humanitarian crises that have resulted in new population displacements. In 2012, hundreds of thousands of new refugees have fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Many arrive in very poor condition and live among host communities which themselves are suffering from acute food and water shortages. While responding to these new refugee crises, UNHCR and its partners continue to address the needs stemming from major, protracted situations. The Office also remains committed to promoting and supporting durable solutions and transition strategies.

2.   In order to enhance its response to these situations and to further strengthen its coordination capacity, UNHCR continues to develop strategic partnerships with United Nations sister agencies as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental actors. At the same time, UNHCR has actively participated in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) review of humanitarian responses led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). Beyond the emergency phase, UNHCR has engaged with development partners in the design, funding, and implementation of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

II.   Partnerships and coordination in humanitarian response

A.   United Nations, inter-governmental organizations, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

3.   Collaboration with operational agencies at the Field level is essential to delivering effective protection and assistance. Key partners include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

4.   UNHCR enjoys excellent cooperation with Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which are often UNHCR's main operational partners. Currently, the Syrian and Tunisian Red Crescent societies undertake the bulk of the protection and assistance activities for refugees and IDPs in those countries. UNHCR is pursuing strategic partnerships with the Red Crescent Societies in the Gulf region (Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) with projects funded and implemented jointly in operations such as Pakistan and Yemen. UNHCR holds regular high-level discussions on protection and humanitarian advocacy with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

5.   UNHCR and UNICEF are strengthening cooperation in several refugee emergencies and exploring closer collaboration globally. A Letter of Understanding between UNHCR and UNICEF in Pakistan outlines enhanced collaboration in the areas of education, maternal and child health, nutrition and child protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Similar efforts are underway in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya and Niger as well as in other emergency operations. UNICEF is playing an active role in implementing a new UNHCR education strategy by facilitating capacity-building workshops at the global and regional level, sharing expertise on girls' education, and developing joint strategies for education. UNICEF contributed to the development of UNHCR's Framework for the Protection of Children and collaboration has been instrumental in the coordination of child protection activities. UNICEF also supplies therapeutic items for the treatment of severely malnourished refugee children in many operations.

6.   UNHCR and WFP enjoy a strong partnership across many regions and operations. In Afghanistan, the collaboration resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies on the delivery of assistance to returnees and conflict-displaced IDPs. A similar Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and WFP was signed in Pakistan while in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal, the two agencies enjoy close cooperation without a formalized relationship. WFP also provided crucial assistance to the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal, undertaking nutrition surveys and fundraising activities with UNHCR.

7.   Overall, some 4.5 million refugees and returnees are receiving food assistance from WFP. At the start of 2012, some 1.9 million refugees, 1.2 million IDPs and half a million returnees in sub-Saharan Africa depended on WFP food assistance. In recent years, the international humanitarian community has moved from providing in-kind items, such as food and non-food items, to the use of cash and vouchers, which allow beneficiaries more choice and control in deciding how to best address their needs. While UNHCR uses cash-based interventions to address multiple needs of refugees, WFP is a key partner in addressing food needs through these approaches. The two agencies formalized this commitment in a joint plan of action on cash and voucher-based interventions.

8.   The International Organization for Migration (IOM) continues to be an important partner for UNHCR. IOM has been particularly constructive in contributing to the comprehensive solutions strategy to bring closure to the Angolan refugee situation, in relation to transport and reintegration activities. In Asia and the Pacific, UNHCR and IOM are co-facilitators in a regional cooperation framework established under the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

B.   Non-governmental organizations

9.   UNHCR works closely with many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Field and seeks to strengthen strategic partnerships with NGO partners globally. NGOs are key allies in ensuring UNHCR's accountability to affected populations and many are strong protection advocates in international policy fora, helping to attract attention and resources to some of the most and intractable displacement situations and protection issues.

10.   NGOs with specific expertise in different domains of education programming are involved in the implementation of the new education strategy, including efforts to build the capacity of partners in the Field. There are also several initiatives, at both the regional and Field levels, in the health sector; for example, UNHCR works closely with the Women's Refugee Commission on adolescent reproductive health as well as family planning programmes.

11.   Since 2011, nine UNHCR operations have collaborated with NGOs, UN agencies and government counterparts to develop country-specific strategies on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).[1] In 2012, the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) surge deployments are supporting the implementation of SGBV strategies in Colombia, Ecuador, India and Pakistan and the development of strategies in Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia. UNHCR is also working with the IRC to enhance technical support to the Field for the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS).[2]

12.   During 2012, eleven UNHCR operations[3] are targeted for the implementation of UNHCR's Framework for the Protection of Children, and country-specific plans are being developed in collaboration with child protection partners, UN agencies, and government

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[1] Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Ecuador, Georgia, India, Pakistan and Yemen.
[2] Possibly focusing on Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda in 2012.
[3] Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Mexico, Rwanda, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and Yemen.

authorities. Capacity is supported through the deployment of child protection experts, including from UNHCR's standby partners.[4]

13. At the end of 2011, the High Commissioner invited NGOs and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to join UNHCR in a Structured Dialogue to review UNHCR's partnerships. In a greatly changed inter-agency environment and with the number of challenges currently being addressed, UNHCR is convinced that it should make the most of the expertise, experience and complementarities of its partners. This Structured Dialogue is expected to reorient UNHCR's partnership approaches to better meet the challenges of the future.

C. Supporting partnerships and coordination with data and information management

14. UNHCR aims to provide partners not only with the data and information they need to adequately assist and protect persons of concern, but also with information management services, such as map-making and data management support.

15. UNHCR's registration and population data management software application, *proGres*, is being redesigned in a project called "*proGres* in Partnership". The application, in which all registration records held by UNHCR are managed, will be re-worked to allow shared data processing and management with partners such as WFP, IOM, and host governments.

16. UNHCR has invested considerable effort in the registration and profiling of refugees and IDPs so that the size, demographics and needs of the displaced can be determined from the earliest stages of an unfolding emergency situation. The Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) is an inter-agency project hosted by UNHCR since 2009. The Human Rights Council (HRC) in its 20th session in June emphasized the importance of effective data collection on internally displaced persons for the protection of their rights, the implementation of durable solutions and the assessment of their specific needs and vulnerabilities. The Council encouraged governments to utilize JIPS in this regard.

D. Coordination in IDP emergencies

17. In IDP emergencies, UNHCR has agreed at the inter-agency level to lead global clusters in protection, emergency shelter, and camp coordination and camp management in IDP emergencies. At the Field level, UNHCR will often be called on to play a cluster lead role in the same areas. The clusters include UN and NGO partners, as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

18. UNHCR leads 17 of the current 25 field protection clusters worldwide, co-chairing eight with NGOs. The Danish Refugee Council co-chairs protection clusters with UNHCR in the Central African Republic and Somalia, while the Norwegian Refugee Council does so in Afghanistan, Colombia and South Sudan. Save the Children facilitates the protection cluster in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Oxfam previously had this role. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) co-chairs the protection cluster with UNHCR in Pakistan, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency co-chairs the protection cluster with UNHCR in Yemen. Sub-national protection clusters also have co-chairing arrangements with NGOs in Pakistan and Somalia.

19. Together with the IFRC, UNHCR co-leads the global shelter cluster, working in partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT),

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[4] Including IRC-SURGE, RedR Australia, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children Sweden and Norway, and others.

IOM, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), Catholic Relief Services and other organizations. UNHCR, with IFRC and ICRC, supports the development of technical alternatives for shelter provision, including winterization options for emergency shelter assistance. UNHCR, IFRC and UN-HABITAT will continue to gather best practices in the shelter sector, building on "Shelter Projects 2010", which compiled experiences of shelter programmes across the world. UNHCR is working with UN-HABITAT, IOM and UNICEF in the coordination of country level clusters in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sri Lanka. UNHCR and ACTED have produced joint shelter assessments in the Central African Republic and Somalia.

20.   UNHCR and IOM reinvigorated partnerships within the global camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster over the past year, leading the cluster members to re-establish a common direction and priorities. The cluster received funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) to reinforce its work. While the CCCM cluster is activated in only a few field situations (including Pakistan and Yemen, where UNHCR is cluster lead), the principles and tools of camp management and coordination supported by the global CCCM cluster are applied in other situations by relevant organizations and other clusters.

E.   Coordination mechanisms and policy initiatives

21.   UNHCR has been actively involved in shaping the outcomes of the IASC's Transformative Agenda, and the High Commissioner is committed to contributing the Office's expertise to continued humanitarian reform efforts. The Transformative Agenda discussions focused on leadership, mutual accountability for collective results, and coordination. UNHCR is active in all these areas at both the IASC and Field levels.

22.   In a large-scale, or Level 3, emergency, the High Commissioner has committed to ensuring that UNHCR's leadership capacity is adequate to the task, both in discharging cluster lead responsibilities and in the overall management of UNHCR's operation as a key player in the humanitarian response. UNHCR has provided experienced senior staff to the roster of senior Humanitarian Coordinators for Level 3 emergencies.

23.   UNHCR has established a Senior Corporate Emergency Roster (SCER), comprising senior staff, to strengthen the leadership of its operations in major emergencies and has consolidated its emergency leadership and coordination training. Together, these initiatives will help UNHCR meet its commitments to having rapidly deployable, experienced and trained people for both IDP and refugee emergencies.

24.   UNHCR is helping to shape key elements of the Transformative Agenda, including the development of inter-agency strategic planning from the outset of a Level 3 emergency. The Office has contributed to new guidance on the cluster approach to ensure the more strategic establishment, management and deactivation of clusters.

25.   IASC organizations participating in the Transformative Agenda discussions recognized the mandate of UNHCR in leading and coordinating any refugee response. The High Commissioner took the opportunity of the Transformative Agenda to also review UNHCR's accountability for refugee leadership and coordination (the cluster approach does not apply to refugee situations). With the extensive application in recent years of the clusters, the need has grown for an effective interface between the coordination of a refugee situation and the coordination of the broader humanitarian response led by the Humanitarian Coordinator.

26.   This was successfully achieved in the context of South Sudan, where initial field-testing of the Transformative Agenda has already taken place. Lessons learned included the need for full information exchange and consultation.

27.   The Syria operation provides another successful example of a coordinated approach. The establishment of a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator by the ERC was complemented by the appointment of a Regional Refugee Coordinator by UNHCR. This provided a direct senior counterpart for both mechanisms in the region.

28.   In the Mali situation, where the broader humanitarian response is extensive, UNHCR appointed a Regional Refugee Coordinator to interact with inter-agency coordination mechanisms, which later included the establishment of a Regional Humanitarian Coordinator post.

III.   Partnerships for solutions

29.   It is clear that the drivers of displacement go beyond armed conflict and persecution, and include natural disasters, desertification, rapid urbanization, food insecurity, water scarcity and violence related to organized crime. Prevention, mitigation and solutions go well beyond the capacity of humanitarian actors, and certainly well beyond the capacity of any one agency. Partnerships and coordination are therefore more important than ever before.

30.   UNHCR supports governments at the national and regional levels to protect and assist the displaced and the stateless. The Office has increased its engagement with partners such as sister UN agencies, bilateral development funds and, increasingly, private partnerships with companies such as IKEA. The Transitional Solutions Initiative, undertaken with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners, and currently in operation in Colombia and Sudan, aims to enhance livelihood opportunities to benefit both the local host community and the displaced population. This also serves to strengthen social cohesion.

31.   In October 2011, the Secretary-General's Policy Committee endorsed a preliminary framework for more coherent and effective responses to the needs of IDPs and refugees returning to their country of origin. The decision, which was the result of efforts by a reintegration working group that UNHCR co-led with UNDP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), should create a greater sense of purpose among partners and a smoother transition to development coordination. The New Deal on Fragile States, announced in November 2011 by the G7+, also presents new prospects for targeted funding and transition 'compacts' that could benefit return and integration. UNHCR actively participates in discussions between the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

32.   Real opportunities for durable solutions are now emerging. For the past several years, UNHCR has engaged relevant stakeholders (including authorities in countries of asylum, countries of origin, and the refugees themselves) in the comprehensive solutions strategies for Angolan, Liberian, and Rwandan refugees, notably through voluntary repatriation and local integration. It is hoped that a proper end to all three refugee situations will at last be achieved. The three comprehensive solution strategies are an important part of UNHCR's larger prioritization of solutions, and build upon advances made in the transition from relief to development, including strengthened partnerships with development actors.

33.   The Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, in collaboration with UNHCR, initiated a quadripartite dialogue in 2011 to develop the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. The Solutions Strategy, the result of an intense consultation process, received full endorsement and support from the international community and stakeholders at a conference held on 2-3 May 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland. A significant element of the Strategy is a partnership with development actors with the aim of increasing

the sustainability of refugee returns. An exchange of letters in November 2011 between the UNDP Administrator and the High Commissioner lent support at the highest levels to joint programmes in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

34. UNHCR continued to be actively engaged in the UN's development coordination, including through the UNDG and its working mechanisms. This included decisions aimed at strengthening coherence and efficiency, harmonization of business practices, and promotion of the "Delivering as One" initiative. These activities have intensified in 2012, the year of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review which defines the *modus operandi* of the UN development system for the next four years.

IV.   Partnerships in the area of statelessness

35.   On the issue of statelessness, where new partnerships are being established and supported by the momentum from the 2011 Commemorations, UNHCR continues to build links with NGOs and academic institutions to improve awareness of statelessness and to formulate effective actions to address it. This year, UNHCR has supported several training initiatives on statelessness, which were led by academic institutions and NGOs, including the Tilburg University Law School in the Netherlands, the Open Society Foundations, the newly-established European Network on Statelessness and Mahidol University in Thailand.

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