

**Bullet point summary of the strategic presentation on
UNHCR's operations in Africa**

**29th meeting of the Standing Committee
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I. INTRODUCTION

- The year 2003 has seen positive developments in terms of peace processes and prospects for durable solutions in Africa. A number of voluntary repatriation programmes are ongoing and nearing completion: Eritrea, North west Somalia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and in due course Angola. Indeed refugee figures in Africa have continued to decrease this year. For several other protracted refugee situations, positive developments on the political front have raised hopes for eventual voluntary repatriation to Liberia, southern Sudan, Burundi and parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the same time, the situation in the western Darfur province of Sudan continues to be a cause for concern, with some 130,000 new arrivals having crossed into Chad. There are also a number of smaller but equally important refugee situations as well as significant urban populations requiring sustained protection, assistance and durable solutions interventions. In those protracted refugee situations where no durable solutions are within immediate reach, efforts to enhance self-sufficiency for refugees are being pursued. In addition, in the increasingly complex environment in which UNHCR is called upon to operate in Africa, the challenges of HIV/AIDS, sexual and gender-based violence, physical insecurity, xenophobia, environmental degradation, food insecurity and other impediments to refugees' enjoyment of basic rights are evident.
- Whilst some pockets of unrest persist in areas of **Central Africa** and the **Great Lakes region**, there are a number of positive developments. These include: the Pretoria Agreement on DRC (potential return of 377,000 Congolese refugees); recent signing of understandings in Burundi between the Government and the rebel movement (800,000 Burundian refugees could eventually return); repatriation of some 20,100 Rwandan refugees from DRC, the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi and Zambia during 2003. In the Central African Republic (CAR) the situation in the North remains tense, preventing the return of 41,000 refugees from neighbouring Chad. The new influx of 130,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur province of Sudan into eastern Chad has been a major cause for concern, with security problems and logistical constraints compounding the challenges of protecting and assisting the refugees.
- In the **East and Horn of Africa**, instability continues in most parts of southern Somalia (Somali refugees from this region remain in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen), whereas North-west Somalia and North-east Somalia remain relatively stable (Somali refugees returning mainly from Ethiopia and Djibouti). Repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan has continued throughout 2003 with some setbacks but should be concluded by the second half of this year. Positive developments in the peace talks on Sudan are giving rise to hopes for the possible return of 600,000 Sudanese refugees from neighbouring countries over the next few years.
- In **West Africa**, voluntary repatriation continued to Sierra Leone and movements should be finalized in 2004, while reintegration activities will continue throughout 2005. The security situation in Liberia continues to improve since the departure of the former President and the steady deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces. These developments should allow some 300,000 Liberian refugees in the region to return over the next three years. In Côte d'Ivoire, the situation remains fragile with slow progress in the implementation of the peace agreement. UNHCR has updated contingency plans in neighbouring countries.

- In **Southern Africa**, peace in Angola has allowed more than 200,000 refugees to repatriate from neighbouring countries. UNHCR's voluntary repatriation movements will continue in 2004. However, serious reintegration challenges exist in Angola as a result of years of war. The adoption of the "4Rs" approach (repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction) would help to bridge the gap between short-term reintegration activities and longer-term development.

II. PROGRESS ON GLOBAL OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA FOR PROTECTION

Support governments in the provision of protection and assistance (Strategic Goal 1)

- Implementation continues on action points of the Comprehensive Implementation Plan (CIP) adopted at the special OAU/UNHCR experts' meeting held in Conakry in March 2000. Particular emphasis will be given to supporting governments in the adoption of appropriate refugee protection measures (*Global Objective 1.2*). Whilst accession to international and regional refugee instruments (*Global Objective 1.1, Agenda for Protection Goal 1.1*) remains an important goal for at least one country in Africa, the biggest challenge for most African States lies in the development, adoption and implementation of national asylum legislation, in conformity with international refugee law and human rights standards (*Global Objective 1.2, Agenda for Protection Goal 1.1*). In order to push this agenda forward, the Africa Bureau commissioned a joint study with the African Union (AU) on the national legislation of 11 countries in Africa, which was issued in July 2003, and which made specific recommendations on ensuring conformity with international standards. These include not only refugee specific rights (e.g. non-refoulement, access to Refugee Status Determination (RSD), registration and documentation) but also civil and socio-economic rights (e.g. right to education, freedom of movement and association, and access to employment). In February 2004, UNHCR issued detailed country studies, providing a comprehensive analysis of the legal framework for refugee protection and amendments required to ensure compliance with international standards, for follow-up by country offices and governments concerned. This work will continue in 2004.
- The High Commissioner's Convention Plus initiative provides a methodology for developing Comprehensive Plans of Action (CPAs) for specific refugee situations, aimed at achieving durable solutions balanced with enhanced protection. The CPAs would be accompanied by special agreements in which the commitments of all parties to the process are spelled out (*Global Objective 1.3*). The Africa Bureau has already launched a preparatory project for a CPA for Somalia and other initiatives are being considered. Also under Convention Plus, a protection gaps analysis for four African countries will be carried out in 2004.
- UNHCR will, wherever possible in collaboration with the AU and other regional organizations, facilitate inter-state dialogue on the formulation and implementation of refugee protection policies and principles (*Global Objective 1.4, Agenda for Protection Goals 1.5, 1.6*). Plans for regional workshops with ECOWAS, IGAD and the African Parliamentary Union are already underway. These dialogues provide an opportunity to sensitize governments on refugee protection issues, and also allow UNHCR to better understand their concerns and views with regard to protection, national security, international burden sharing and other issues. A joint seminar between UNHCR and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights held in March 2003 resulted in the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aimed at strengthened monitoring of implementation of the 1969 OAU Convention through the activities of the Commission. The elaboration of joint projects is currently underway (*Global Objective 10.3, 10.6, Agenda for Protection Goal 1.6.3*).
- UNHCR will continue to promote the establishment of special camps for former combatants separated from the civilian refugee population, to guarantee the civilian nature and humanitarian character of refugee status and refugee settings (*Agenda for Protection Goal 4.1*).

- Rapidly evolving situations in Africa require a strong institutional emergency preparedness and response capacity to plan for and deal with sudden large-scale population movements (*Global Objectives 1.7, and 8.4*). There is an ongoing need to ensure that contingency plans, stockpile arrangements and staffing preparedness are adequate. Planning activities should include building local and regional capacities to ensure asylum systems and protection performance conform to international standards, and that adequate reception arrangements are in place (*Global Objective 2.1, AfP3.2, AfP1.9*). A recent example is that of Chad, where some 130,000 refugees have fled conflict in Sudan's Darfur province and are currently settled along the 1,350 km Chad-Sudan border. UNHCR has mobilized emergency response teams and has now recruited permanent staff to deal with the challenging protection and assistance issues for this refugee group.

Assess the protection requirements of refugees and other persons of concern and analyse UNHCR's and partners' performance in regard to the provision of protection and assistance (*Strategic Goal 3*)

- In order to better tailor protection and assistance programmes, improvements in registration data and the provision of documentation for refugees, including for urban refugees, continue to be a priority (*Global Objective 3.1, Agenda for Protection Goal 1.11*). Project Profile and the pilot use of biometrics technology in Africa will be fully supported to improve the quality of data collection and analysis. Disaggregated demographic data (sex/age) will feature in all 2005 Country Operations Plans (COPs). In the United Republic of Tanzania a pilot biometrics registration exercise is about to start. A registration exercise for Angolan refugees was undertaken, prior to organized voluntary repatriation, and in the planning for DRC and Sudan, registration workshops focused on systematizing the use of existing registration data to facilitate repatriation processing. In the registration for the two Chad emergencies (CAR refugees and Sudanese refugees), new standards for ensuring individual registration have been implemented.
- Despite the positive prospects for voluntary repatriation in Africa in the coming years, improving the quality and standards of protection and assistance for refugees remains the pivotal challenge for UNHCR, particularly at a time when the availability of resources for refugee programmes is globally low. The preparation of the COPs for 2005 will be based on a core set of quantifiable indicators and standards covering basic areas of concern such as education, food security and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, shelter and protection. The adoption of this systematic programming tool should help over time to measure the relative conditions of refugee populations within and among countries (*Global Objective 3.2*). Further work on standards and quantifiable indicators in urban, settlement and returnee situations will also be undertaken.

Resolve refugee situations through voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration (*Strategic Goal 4*)

- UNHCR continues to regard voluntary repatriation as the most desirable durable solution and continues to work towards this objective. Active repatriation operations in Africa include: the voluntary repatriation of Sierra Leoneans from Guinea and from Liberia; the continuing repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan; the repatriation of Somali refugees mainly to North-west Somalia; the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from Zambia, DRC and Namibia; the repatriation of Rwandese; and a limited operation into some of the more secure parts of Burundi. A number of other voluntary repatriation operations are expected to start in 2004 and 2005 if the various peace processes (Liberia, Sudan, Burundi, DRC) continue to evolve positively. (*Global Objective 4.1; Agenda for Protection Goal 5.2*).
- Reintegration of returnees often poses a challenge that cannot be addressed by UNHCR alone. Solid partnerships with a number of actors, including governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies are crucial in order to share responsibilities and agree upon the way forward. The "4Rs" strategy is well

underway in Sierra Leone, Eritrea and North-west Somalia, and progress is expected in Angola and Liberia this year. If the peace processes are successful in Burundi, Sudan and DRC, the same approach will be focused there. An integrated and comprehensive approach by all relevant stakeholders should effectively bridge the gap between relief and longer-term development (*Global Objective 4.3*).

Strengthen and expand upon local integration possibilities (*Strategic Goal 5*)

- For some groups of refugees, return home is not an immediate prospect. UNHCR will seek to increase these groups' self-reliance pending return whilst also addressing the needs of their host communities (*Global Objectives 1.9, 5.4, 7.1, 7.2; Agenda for Protection goal 5.4*). The "DLI" (Development through Local Integration) and "DAR" (Development Assistance for Refugees) concepts include the Zambia Initiative, the Uganda Self Reliance Strategy and the Chogo settlement for Somali refugees in Tanzania.

Improve resettlement capacities and opportunities (*Strategic Goal 6*)

- The resettlement management system for Africa aims at ensuring equal access to resettlement for all deserving cases, guaranteeing the integrity of the resettlement process, enhancing the use of resettlement as both a protection tool and a durable solution and, ultimately, making use of resettlement as an instrument for meaningful burden sharing. UNHCR has converted the Regional Hub positions into regular posts in 2004 and an increase in staffing has enhanced resettlement operations from Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya and United Republic of Tanzania. A major resettlement activity is taking place in Côte d'Ivoire with the ongoing resettlement of some 8,900 Liberian "at-risk" refugees. This should be completed by early 2004.

Enhancing gender-equality and participation (*Strategic Goal 7*)

- The High Commissioner's "Five Commitments to Refugee Women" remains the main guide for enhancing gender-equality and participation. There has been gradual but significant improvement in the participation of women in decision-making, especially with regard to issues affecting their lives. Most offices in Africa undertake ongoing sensitization activities and have established women's committees and centres, and progress has been made in many countries with regard to women's participation in general camp management committees.
- Most offices in Africa have been providing sanitary and hygiene products, including soap, to refugee women. Some offices have undertaken needs assessments and individual registration for these purposes. All offices have been instructed to use a separate budget line to ensure the systematic provision of sanitary materials to refugee women in camp situations.
- Individual country plans of action are being implemented to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in refugee camps in Africa (*Global Objective 2.2, Agenda for Protection Goal 4.4*). They are aimed at improving monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including increasing dialogue with the refugees, implementing partners and local administrations on the issue, as well as introducing viable measures for preventive and remedial action. A review of the longstanding SGBV programmes in United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda was carried out in June 2003. The findings of the review were shared widely. Uganda, Kenya, Eritrea, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Namibia have established confidential reporting systems for refugees to report cases of SGBV. UNHCR is working on including female police officers in camp patrols in several countries. In addition, SGBV workshops and facilitation sessions on the UNHCR Code of Conduct form part of the training schedule for all offices in Africa (*Global Objectives 7.3, 7.5; Agenda for Protection Goals 4.4.3, 8.14*).

- There is general recognition that UNHCR's policy priorities for refugee women and children have not been completely mainstreamed into general programme implementation. In order to start addressing this issue, UNHCR offices in Guinea and Uganda are participating in a pilot project to mainstream gender and age-related protection and assistance issues into the 2005 COPs.

Partnerships – Build effective partnerships to better protect people of concern and ensure delivery of quality programmes (*Strategic Goal 10*)

- In all aspects of UNHCR's work, partnerships are crucial. In line with the Global Objectives relating to "Advocacy" and "Partnerships", the Africa Bureau is developing new partnerships and closer working relationships with specialized United Nations agencies and NGOs for sector-specific technical cooperation and resource mobilization (*Global Objective 10.3*). Such partnerships are critical for protection, reintegration activities, the rehabilitation of refugee-impacted areas, the global strategy to combat HIV/AIDS (*Global Objective 2.6*), and other thematic humanitarian issues. Examples of innovative partnership in Africa include those with the African Parliamentary Union, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and other regional and sub-regional organizations. (*Global Objectives 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8*).
- UNHCR's involvement in discussions on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is one strategic avenue that the Office has taken. UNHCR has been assigned chairmanship of the sub-cluster on humanitarian response and post-conflict recovery. In addition to putting refugees, returnees and IDPs on the NEPAD agenda, UNHCR continues with its partners to advocate for the recognition that good governance, peace and security and conflict resolution are preconditions for sustainable development in Africa, as outlined in the preamble of NEPAD. (*Global Objectives 9.7, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.9, 11.7*).
- During 2004-2005, the Africa Bureau will put increased effort into developing strategies and eventually a project to enhance capacity building for African national and regional NGOs. This activity is particularly relevant in countries where UNHCR has a limited presence or is planning to phase out. In addition, increasing partnership with African NGOs has longer-term impact on building stronger and better equipped civil society when it comes to humanitarian, human rights and peace-building activities (*Global Objectives 10.2 and 10.6*). For example, over the past five years, UNHCR has been working with South African legal NGOs in five cities to provide legal and social counselling for refugees and asylum seekers. In 2003, UNHCR started a similar arrangement with a national NGO in Burundi to strengthen returnee monitoring and legal counselling for refugees and asylum seekers.

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