

**Introductory Remarks of Andrew Harper
Director of the Division of Programme Support & Management**

**Global Strategic Priorities (EC/70/SC/CRP.13)
75th Meeting of the Standing Committee
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Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to introduce Conference Room Paper 13, which provides an update on the progress UNHCR made against the Global Strategic Priorities – or GSPs - in the first year of the 2018/2019 biennium.

The Global Strategic Priorities represent areas where UNHCR makes focused efforts to improve protection and find solutions for refugees and other persons of concern. They guide UNHCR operations in developing their annual plans and priorities. GSPs also inform the participatory planning process with host governments and partners.

The conference paper before you provides a succinct overview of UNHCR's achievements on operational and management GSPs. The brief narrative and its three annexes are complemented by the *2018 Progress Report on the Global Strategic Priorities* which contains more detailed information, including illustrative examples from the field. It was published on the Global Focus website and a hardcopy has been made available to all delegations this morning.

Let me emphasize, as I did last year, that management of the Global Strategic Priorities is a dynamic process. Progress achieved in one year, cannot be taken for granted in the following year. Most of the GSP areas require constant attention and investment to even maintain previous year's results.

Achievements towards the GSPs must also be seen in the wider context. As the High Commissioner laid out in his briefing to the Security Council in April, we live in times of unprecedented stigmatization of refugees,

where toxic language around this issue has become pervasive. Coupled with prevailing insecurity and conflict, as well as the compounding effects of climate change, the achievement of GSPs is now more challenging than ever.

With a view to 'leave no one behind', as called for in the Sustainable Development Goals, UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of persons of concern into national plans. This is supported by the strong operational alignment of the GSPs with the SDGs in the areas of gender equality, peace and justice, food security, health, education, livelihoods and water sanitation and hygiene.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to review some of the 2018 GSP results. Overall, I am pleased to report improvements across many critical areas. Yet, the overall picture is mixed, with setbacks in some important domains.

Registration at birth and the issuance of birth certificates is essential in preventing statelessness. We saw important improvements in some countries, including in Burundi, Ghana, and Rwanda. Regionally, UNHCR and partners were able to significantly reduce the percentage of undocumented Syrian refugee children from approximately 35 per cent in 2012 to less than 2 per cent in 2018.

In the area of **health**, I am glad to report that UNHCR working together with health partners have been able to improve the average **under-five mortality** rate globally. Mortality levels have been maintained well within acceptable standards for humanitarian situations in 88 per cent of monitored locations. All sites that are below the standard are located in Sudan and Cameroon, in areas that are chronically underserved for both refugees and host populations. UNHCR and its partners are systematically supporting health systems, and address the underlying causes of diseases such as poor water and sanitation, chronic food insecurity, and weak immunization coverage.

UNHCR also faced difficulties to fully address **Global Acute Malnutrition** among children in several protracted refugee situations, including in Gambella, Ethiopia and in the Sudan. Nutrition surveys show levels above the 15 per cent emergency threshold in eight sites – an improvement over 2017. On the other hand, only 33 of the surveyed sites met the stricter

UNHCR GAM standards. Similar to mortality rates, the factors giving rise to malnutrition are very sensitive to changes in the environment, living conditions, health care access and food security situation and as such can fluctuate from one year to another. The dynamic nature of humanitarian situations means that newly arrived children are often malnourished or previously treated children relapse, making progress difficult to sustain.

Mr. Chair,

The number of people fleeing war, persecution and conflict in 2018 was higher than ever, while the number of people able to find a **solution** was very low. Voluntary repatriation continues to be constrained by new and on-going conflicts and volatile security situations in countries of origin. Yet, almost 600,000 individuals **returned** during the year to countries including Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Somalia.

Against this background, the **Global Compact on Refugees** intends to provide a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing for large refugee movements and protracted situations. One of its key objectives is to support conditions in countries of origin to ensure a safe and dignified return.

In cases where repatriation is not an option, UNHCR continued engagement with national governments, local authorities, civil society and the private sector to strengthen **local integration of refugees**. Overall, 74 per cent of operations reported some improvement, with several governments taking steps to facilitate better integration, including in Latin America and West Africa.

For some of the world's most vulnerable refugees, **resettlement** continues to be an important protection tool. The needs for resettlement significantly surpassed the opportunities for refugees to be placed in a third country. UNHCR submitted over 80,000 refugees for resettlement, an 8 per cent increase compared to the previous year, but only half compared to 2016. More importantly, the number of refugees to actually depart to a third country with UNHCR's assistance, dropped by 14 per cent. The USA remained the main receiving country for UNHCR-referred refugees, followed by Canada, the United Kingdom, Sweden and France. Despite the remarkable solidarity shown by some receiving countries, resettlement opportunities met only 7 per cent of global needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to the support and management GSPs, which focus on some of the priority functions provided by headquarters and regional offices.

We have further expanded the use of **Cash** to meet humanitarian needs in ways that restore and enhance individual choice and dignity. In 2018, UNHCR delivered USD 568 million of assistance in cash, an increase of 13 per cent compared to 2017. The majority was unrestricted, while more than 30 per cent were provided to meet specific protection needs.

In order to streamline cash programmes, UNHCR advanced the development of CashAssist – a transparent platform for UNHCR and partners to create and send secure payment instructions to financial service providers. This ensures greater efficiency, accountability and traceability, while avoiding duplication and minimizing fraud. CashAssist is currently rolled out in five countries and will gradually be introduced to all operations by June 2022.

Responding to new emergencies and deteriorating situations, UNHCR deployed more than 400 staff to lead, coordinate and support refugee and IDP responses across 48 operations.

In today's global environment, where forced displacement is often politicised, **data** and reliable analysis are essential tools to orient the international protection and solutions debate. At the same time, they remain a key resource to respond to the needs of refugees.

UNHCR has strengthened identity management capabilities and expanded the coverage of PRIMES – its Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem. By the end of 2018, the proGres v4 case management tool was operational in 58 countries and regional offices, with some 10.5 million individual records registered. UNHCR was also expanding the use of biometrics across 60 operations and was holding some 7.2 million biometric records.

Close cooperation with trusted partners is also key to ensure that data is used efficiently and securely. Therefore, a data-sharing agreement was concluded with WFP to include assessment and monitoring data, as well as reciprocal data sharing on IDPs and host communities. UNHCR is also

working with the World Bank on open data and procedures for accessing microdata.

Faced with continuously growing needs, as a result of new emergencies, as well as recurrent and protracted displacement, UNHCR has further intensified its **resource mobilization** efforts. Donors responded generously and provided UNHCR with over USD 4.18 billion. The level of funds raised from the private sector grew to USD 422 million, representing a steady increase over previous years.

Mr. Chair,

Let me stop here on the 2018 results and very briefly introduce the Global Strategic Priorities for the 2020-2021 biennium.

With the aim of ensuring continuity over time to track progress, we have decided to maintain the use of the current GSPs for the coming biennium. Before changing the existing set of GSPs, we felt that it would be best to await the revision of our results-based management system. Once completed and implemented, this will help us to strengthen our approach to reporting against global strategic priorities.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the team and the offices around the world who have made the progress towards the targets, and who made this report possible.

I now look forward to hearing any comments or questions that you may have regarding the Global Strategic Priorities.

Thank you.

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