

**Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme (86th meeting)
Remarks by Raouf Mazou, Assistant High Commissioner for
Operations
Geneva, 7 March 2023**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Vice-Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Numbers tell a story. Regrettably our figures reflect the grim reality of the state of global forced displacement. Since we met a year ago, we have unfortunately witnessed a continuous increase in the number of displaced persons around the world, which now stands at over 100 million. As a result, in 2022 we had to declare a staggering 35 emergencies in 25 countries. In addition to conflict, violence and human rights violations, several of the emergencies to which we responded were triggered by climate change and natural hazards, such as the earthquake that devastated parts of Türkiye and Syria just a month ago.

In several regions, we have also experienced a significant increase in mixed movements. When I travelled to Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico last year, I witnessed the ordeal of people travelling alone or in small groups taking incredible risks on perilous routes, in search of safer lives. Such movements may not be described as emergencies, but it is important to mention that Mexico and Costa Rica – for instance – registered 119,000 and 130,000 asylum claims respectively last year, a drastic increase as compared to previous years.

The increase in displaced and stateless persons has unfortunately not been matched everywhere by an increase in resources available. Besides Europe and Asia, which saw a combined increase of USD 943 million in resources available, the remaining regions experienced a reduction of over USD 328 million in 2022 in comparison to 2021.

With the overall funding increasing but not keeping pace with the needs of forcibly displaced persons, the weight shouldered by asylum countries - most of which are low- and middle-income countries – has increased. The impact of the COVID pandemic on the global economy, combined with the consequences of the war in Ukraine have further disproportionately affected displaced populations around the world. Food assistance, so crucial to the well-being of refugees in some 40 countries, who are food insecure and rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs, has also sadly been affected by funding shortfalls.

Vice-Chairperson, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

In the past few weeks, we have seen the flight of close to 100,000 persons from Laascaanood in Somaliland to Ethiopia. This crisis takes place in a region – the Horn of Africa – which has in the past decade seen some of the highest levels of forced displacement in the world and is currently experiencing its worst drought in recent history.

This new crisis, added to many others around the world in a context of insufficient humanitarian resources, highlights the need to continue making responses more sustainable. Sustainable responses not only aim at self-reliance for the persons for whom we work, but also contribute towards their inclusion in existing social protection schemes and reduce the need for developing parallel humanitarian responses.

Thankfully, four years after the General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees and three years after the first Global Refugee

Forum, we are seeing increasing socio-economic inclusion, stronger regional approaches and more effective collaboration among multilateral and bilateral actors in the search for solutions. The feedback from the Support Platforms at yesterday's informal briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees underscored important progress in this regard.

On inclusion, it is also greatly encouraging to see that following the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of Governments are adopting policies allowing refugee access to social services such as education, health care and in some cases social protection schemes. These efforts are indeed welcome.

As you will hear from Bureau Directors, regional strategies - some of which are strengthened by support platforms – are where it is appropriate effectively facilitating a dialogue for protection and solutions between countries of origin and countries of asylum. In all regions, Bureaus are – for the same purpose - also investing in strong partnerships with actors at the local, national, regional and global levels to address common emerging priorities.

Last year, the High Commissioner's Protection Dialogue, which focused on Development Cooperation, demonstrated the commitment of development actors to include forced displacement in their strategies. It convened over 500 stakeholders from States, inter-governmental and international organizations, development actors, international financial institutions, peace actors, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and refugee-led organizations.

Our collaboration with International Financial Institutions - including the World Bank and Regional Development Banks – in the response to forced displacement alongside other bilateral and multilateral development actors, has continued to expand.

Last year, I made reference to the World Bank IDA financing window having contributed USD 2.46 billion since it was introduced. Under IDA18 and IDA19 Window for Hosts and Refugees, UNHCR collaborated with the World Bank by providing refugee protection assessments, refugee policy review and on the design of USD 3.6 billion investments supporting 60 World Bank operations in 16 low-income refugee hosting countries in Africa and Asia. An unprecedented injection of dedicated development financing in support to refugee hosting countries.

The continuation of the Window for Hosts and Refugees financing envelope under the IDA20 (USD 2.4 billion) is very welcome. It is a strong signal of support to governments hosting refugees, in line with the principle of responsibility sharing.

Finally, on this point, I would like to highlight two noteworthy developments in our collaboration with International Financial Institutions.

Firstly, we currently have a colleague seconded at the International Monetary Fund. She has been fostering and shaping the engagement between UNHCR and IMF by strategically exploring relevant synergies on issues of mutual concern at various levels, to meaningfully address needs of forcibly displaced people, as well as affected communities.

Secondly, in December 2022, we launched a partnership with the International Finance Corporation. The Joint Initiative implementation team will be composed of up to 12 staff members from both UNHCR and IFC. The team based in IFC's Regional Office in Istanbul, Türkiye, has started its operations in January 2023. Its main objective is to support the design of innovative and scalable private-sector solutions-oriented projects to be implemented in forced displacement contexts. To achieve this objective, the team will facilitate the engagement between IFC and UNHCR and contribute to deepening the knowledge of our respective operations and capacities across both organizations.

Madam Vice -Chair, distinguished delegates,

The cooperation with sister United Nations Agencies in protection, assistance and search for durable solutions for displaced population is strong. The new global strategic collaboration framework signed with UNICEF as well as the UNDP-UNHCR Global Collaboration Framework attest to this. These milestone collaborations cover wash, education and child protection, statelessness, data, livelihoods with an overall goal of fostering greater inclusion and identifying more sustainable solutions for displaced populations.

Another area of important inter-agency cooperation is the work of the Secretary General's Advisor on durable solutions for IDPs supported by the Global Steering Group - which we are an active member of - along with UNDP, IOM, DCO, OCHA, UNICEF, DPPA, DPO and the World Bank (as an observer). We are also playing our lead role as part of the cluster system in protection, shelter and CCCM.

Madam Vice-Chair, distinguished delegates

As mentioned earlier, more and more displacement situations are linked directly or indirectly to climate change or natural disasters.

In 2022, extreme weather impacted operations and persons we serve across the globe - from catastrophic flooding in Pakistan, the DRC and parts of the Sahel, displacing millions of people - to relentless drought and suffering in Afghanistan, Madagascar and the Horn of Africa. People already living in displacement were disproportionately impacted. The onward displacement of over 3,900 Syrian refugees in Lebanon as a result of devastating winter storms in January 2022 and the damage caused to 80 percent of refugee shelters in Maratane settlement in Mozambique by cyclone Gombe in April 2022 are just two of many examples of the devastating consequences experienced by the people we serve.

In line with the Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability Strategy launched in December 2021, we are therefore enhancing climate action related activities in our multi-year country plans.

It should however be stressed that in order to adequately respond to the impact of climate change on displaced populations, additional resources are required. We will for that purpose further strengthen our fundraising capacity to identify new and additional climate related funding opportunities.

Madam Vice-Chair,

Before concluding, allow me to make an appeal on the need to preserve the gains we have made over the past few years in our attempts to build more sustainable responses leading to refugee inclusion in the communities hosting them. As I stated at the start of my remarks, numbers tell a story. The funding cuts experienced by some large operations in 2022 and those foreseen in 2023 will make it impossible for them to address the urgent humanitarian needs while investing in long term sustainability. It is therefore essential that we continue to receive the support required for both emergency humanitarian assistance and inclusion efforts.

Finally, on behalf of all colleagues around the world - some of whom are working in the most difficult security contexts – thank you for your continued commitment to the protection of refugees and other displaced persons, and for your unwavering resolve towards the search for durable solutions.

Thank you.