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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**Annual report pursuant to General Assembly
Resolution 428 (V)**

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Chapter I

Introduction

1. This report covers the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. At the end of 2024, the number of forcibly displaced persons was estimated at 123.2 million, an increase of 6 million compared to 2023. This included internally displaced persons (73.5 million), refugees under the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (31 million) and asylum-seekers (8.4 million), other people in need of international protection (5.9 million) and Palestine refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (5.9 million). A total of 4.4 million people were estimated to be stateless or of undetermined nationality.

2. Conflict, human rights violations and persecution drove people to flee within and across borders in all regions of the world, with displacement exacerbated by extreme weather events in many locations. By the end of 2024, the Sudan situation had become the most severe humanitarian crisis worldwide, with 14.3 million people displaced from their homes. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo worsened, though the signing of a peace agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in June 2025 brought hope for an end to this long-standing conflict. In Europe, the international armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine entered its fourth year, with widespread hostilities and insecurity continuing to threaten civilian populations. In Myanmar, the humanitarian situation further deteriorated, as a result of the earthquake that took place in March 2025, aggravating the effects of the long-standing internal conflict, while large-scale deportations to Afghanistan worsened the already fragile situation inside the country.

3. The situation in the Middle East was increasingly fragile, with implications for regional and global peace and security. As a consequence of the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, over 1 million people were displaced both within Lebanon and into the Syrian Arab Republic, although most Lebanese returned following the ceasefire in November 2024. Following the sudden change in government in the Syrian Arab Republic in December 2024, there was renewed hope among displaced Syrians. Over 640,000 Syrian refugees and approximately 1.7 million internally displaced persons have returned home, while years of protracted conflict have left the country's infrastructure and economy devastated, requiring urgent support to enable the sustainability of returns.

4. Approximately 73 per cent of the world's refugees and others in need of international protection were hosted in low- and middle-income countries, where national capacities, resources and systems remained stretched or absent. Nevertheless, many host countries continued to provide access to asylum, safeguarding millions. UNHCR, in collaboration with partners, delivered critical assistance across more than 130 countries. It responded to 26 newly declared emergencies in 20 countries and dispatched \$45.85 million worth of relief items from its seven emergency stockpiles. In 2025, the humanitarian aid sector faced an unprecedented financial crisis, posing severe consequences for the forcibly displaced.

5. During 2024, 1.6 million refugees and 8.2 million internally displaced persons were able to return home, an increase of 0.5 million refugees and 3.1 million internally displaced persons from 2023. Resettlement increased by 19 per cent from 2023, with some 188,800 refugees resettled to third countries. However, a marked decline in the number of available resettlement places in 2025 has had a detrimental effect on opportunities for solutions for the most at-risk refugees. Reinforced by the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, 47,200 individuals were able to acquire or confirm their nationality in 2024.

6. UNHCR personnel continued to operate in high-risk environments with heightened threats due to conflict. Budget reductions will place additional challenges on efforts to maintain effective security risk management measures in place.

Chapter II

Evolving global landscape

7. Severe funding cuts compelled UNHCR to implement austerity measures and conduct an extensive review of its operations, reassessing core activities and reducing its global presence and workforce. These measures have had profoundly negative impacts on the forcibly displaced and the countries that host them. The reduction in the UNHCR workforce has been substantial, and support measures have been implemented to mitigate the impact on individuals and teams, including with respect to career transition, learning opportunities and counselling. In view of the financial situation, UNHCR remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and the quality and speed of its service delivery.

8. The United Nations Secretary-General launched the UN80 Initiative in March 2025 aimed at modernizing the organization to adapt to the rapidly changing global environment and to remain agile and efficient in addressing contemporary challenges. UNHCR is contributing to these efforts through the UN80 humanitarian cluster. In particular, it is designing practical efficiency measures and proactively pursuing opportunities to generate cost-savings through system-wide collaboration. It is also leading joint initiatives under the United Nations High-Level Committee on Management, such as United Nations FLEET, treasury services and global insurance management.

9. In response to the crisis in the humanitarian sector, the Emergency Relief Coordinator launched the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Reset, which focuses on the prioritization of life-saving actions, the review and reform of coordination structures, and efforts to strengthen the capacity of local and national actors. Within the Humanitarian Reset, UNHCR is championing leaner, more adaptable coordination models, stronger protection leadership with a more action-oriented architecture, and locally-led response frameworks. Additionally, UNHCR is collaborating with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on a joint financial tracking system to streamline reporting and coordination, enhance transparency in humanitarian funding, and ensure that resources are directed where they are needed most.

10. In parallel, UNHCR will ensure more sustainable responses to forced displacement through strong partnerships with development actors and an approach that fosters self-reliance and inclusion. Such a model contributes to the implementation of all four objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, with emphasis on a whole-of-society response. Moreover, it is supporting implementation of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. It is also leveraging multi-stakeholder pledges made during the Global Refugee Forums in 2019 and 2023.

11. In 2025, UNHCR commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of its Statute by the United Nations General Assembly. This milestone represents a reaffirmation of the organization's mandate and renewal of its commitment to protecting and finding solutions for forcibly displaced populations worldwide, amidst increasing challenges.

Chapter III

Protection

A. Refugees and asylum-seekers

12. The number of refugees under the mandate of UNHCR and others in need of international protection worldwide stood at 36.8 million in 2024, a decrease from 37.4 million in 2023. It reflects lower numbers of Afghan and Syrian refugees, as well as updated reporting on Ukrainian refugees. Women and girls accounted for 50 per cent, while children accounted for 41 per cent.

13. Nearly 2.6 million people received international protection or temporary protection, including 775,900 who submitted individual asylum claims. Some 3.1 million individual asylum applications were registered with States or UNHCR, compared to 3.6 million the year

before. Approximately 8.4 million asylum-seekers were awaiting a decision on their individual applications at the end of 2024, an increase of 6.9 million over 2023.

14. Asylum systems faced mounting pressure caused by increasingly complex drivers of displacement and onward and mixed movements of refugees and migrants. In response, some countries introduced restrictive measures that limited access to territory and asylum procedures or sought to externalize asylum responsibilities. UNHCR engaged with States and partners to respond to such challenges. This included issuing guidance on access to territory and asylum in different contexts, on lawful transfers of asylum-seekers and refugees, and on return of people not in need of international protection, to help strengthen State responses to people seeking asylum as well as responses to mixed and onward movements in ways that are consistent with international law. UNHCR also engaged in strengthening national asylum systems globally to swiftly and fairly address applications, including by supporting case processing, digitalization, and backlog management strategies in countries such as Costa Rica, Italy, Mexico, Peru and South Africa. While some countries extended or established temporary or other legal stay arrangements for specific populations, others ended such arrangements – despite ongoing conflict, persecution, instability and other risks in countries of origin. This put affected people at risk of forced return, at variance with the principle of non-refoulement.

15. Preventing refoulement remained central to the organization's mandated protection work. With incidents of threatened or actual refoulement documented in all regions and increasing in some situations and for some groups, the work of UNHCR to prevent and address such risks remains lifesaving.

16. Some States addressed asylum challenges through regional initiatives. In December 2024, as part of the fortieth anniversary of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, 24 States in the Americas adopted the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action. This aims to strengthen asylum systems by modernizing procedures, reducing backlogs, and fostering regional cooperation and capacity-building. It also provides a framework and guidance for States to address the protection needs of persons displaced in the context of extreme weather events. In West and Central Africa, asylum authorities continued to strengthen the efficiency, quality and sustainability of their asylum systems. Asylum-strengthening initiatives were also pursued through the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Southern African Development Community. In the European Union, following adoption of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, Member States are developing national action plans in preparation for its implementation.

17. UNHCR promotes accession to international instruments that protect the rights of refugees and supervises their application. It contributes to law reform in many countries and regions with guidance aimed at reinforcing their ability to address challenges, in line with international standards. Such support was provided to numerous States, as well as to the Economic Community of Central African States, the European Union and the Southern African Development Community.

18. UNHCR conducted refugee status determination under its mandate in approximately 45 countries. To improve the quality and efficiency of its procedures, UNHCR issued internal guidance on strategic engagement in mandate refugee status determination, workforce planning and the effective use of differentiated case processing modalities.

B. Internally displaced persons

19. By the end of 2024, 73.5 million persons were internally displaced, an increase of 6.3 million from 2023. This was driven by the intensification of conflicts in Myanmar and the Sudan, escalating gang violence in Haiti and revised numbers in Colombia. The prolonged conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained one of the largest internal displacement crises globally (over 7.3 million as of April 2025).

20. UNHCR supported States in upholding their responsibilities towards internally displaced persons. Technical assistance was provided to develop, amend and implement legal, policy and institutional frameworks, in alignment with international standards. Support

was extended to Cameroon, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Ukraine, as well as the Mexican States of Michoacán and Oaxaca. UNHCR emphasized the importance of meaningful consultation with displaced communities in the formulation of these frameworks. The UNHCR Global Report on Law and Policy on Internal Displacement published in 2025 provides an overview of recent legal and policy developments and highlights lessons learned and good practices.

21. To date, a total of 45 laws on internal displacement have been adopted by 18 countries. In the Philippines, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao adopted the first rights-based law on internal displacement in South-East Asia, and over 15 municipalities passed ordinances on internal displacement. UNHCR supported the development of regulations in Chad and Honduras, which are essential for the effective implementation of laws on internal displacement.

22. In collaboration with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, the Protection Expert Group for Internally Displaced Persons and the Institute of International Humanitarian Law, UNHCR organized a cross-regional forum on implementing laws and policies on internal displacement in Africa, marking the fifteenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The event brought together 13 African countries in a dialogue on overcoming challenges to implementing laws and policies on internal displacement, including through domestication of the Convention.

23. In line with the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, UNHCR facilitated the provision of protection, assistance and solutions to internally displaced persons in over 30 countries across regions. It committed to serve as a Solutions Champion, supporting country-level efforts to achieve durable solutions to internal displacement.

24. UNHCR developed and disseminated a protection risk assessment tool to support United Nations Country Teams in identifying and addressing protection risks for internally displaced persons. It also led the revision of the IASC Policy on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons, reinforcing inter-agency coordination and accountability. UNHCR remained the global cluster lead for protection and led 28 out of 32 protection clusters and cluster-like mechanisms, providing tailored support to many countries. In line with the IASC Action Plan on the Centrality of Protection 2023-2025, a Community of Practice on the Centrality of Protection was established in July 2024 by UNHCR, InterAction and OCHA to address priority protection risks in humanitarian emergencies. Targeted capacity-building initiatives on protection in armed conflict and frontline negotiations were organized in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, in collaboration with the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation.

25. The funding shortfall has adversely impacted the ability of UNHCR to address the needs of internally displaced persons, and critical protection activities have been reduced or suspended, including community-based protection, prevention and response to gender-based violence, child protection, legal assistance and mobile outreach. This has left these populations increasingly vulnerable to protection risks.

C. Mixed and onward movements

26. Refugees and asylum-seekers continued to undertake perilous journeys across various regions, alongside migrants. In response, UNHCR worked with States to manage the challenges posed by onward and mixed movements and promote alternatives to dangerous journeys, reinforcing protection at all points along key routes.

27. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Mixed Migration Centre and UNHCR documented the risks, violations of rights and extreme forms of violence faced by refugees and migrants along routes across Africa leading to the Mediterranean coastline. The findings called for a more programmatic, "route-based" approach to addressing the drivers of irregular movements. UNHCR also published a mapping of protection services available along the central and western Mediterranean routes, identifying gaps in service provision and opportunities to strengthen protection. To support coordinated responses to

mixed movements, regional dialogues with States were convened across regions in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2025, while the Americas witnessed a sharp decline in northbound movements, including a 98 per cent decrease in crossings through the Darien, complex and often dangerous cross-border journeys continued within Latin America, some of which involved returns.

28. While movements by sea continued, humanitarian responses were hampered by insufficient data. To address this, UNHCR partnered with the Mixed Migration Centre to conduct research on trends, routes, key risks and intentions to undertake dangerous journeys along the eastern, north-west, southern Africa and western Indian Ocean routes.

29. In December 2024, UNHCR issued a statement on distress at sea, reminding States of their international obligations to rescue people in distress, uphold human rights, put in place safeguards and ensure accountability for human rights violations at sea. UNHCR supported protection measures for persons moving by sea and facilitated dialogue among key stakeholders, including IOM and the International Chamber of Shipping. At disembarkation points, where permitted, UNHCR facilitated access to asylum procedures and ensured that refugees and other vulnerable persons received assistance.

30. While in many countries, restrictive border and asylum policies led to the detention of increasing numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers, including children, others like Colombia and Ecuador refrained from using immigration detention. UNHCR continued to call for legal and policy reforms to halt arbitrary detention. To advance reforms and promote good practices on alternatives to detention, UNHCR provided inputs to the Guidelines on Alternatives to Detention of the European Union Agency for Asylum and the Good Practices on Alternatives to Detention in Return Procedures of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (known as FRONTEX). UNHCR also released an advocacy brief on ending immigration detention and published legal guidance to support States in the effective implementation of their obligations of non-penalization of irregularly entering or staying refugees and asylum-seekers, as defined in Article 31 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

31. Displaced and stateless people, particularly women and girls, remained at heightened risk of human trafficking. Child trafficking and trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour, often perpetrated by non-State armed groups and criminal networks operating with impunity, have devastating consequences, with many victims unable to access protection and support. The European Union revised its directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting victims, which entered into force in July 2024. This obliges Member States to strengthen coordination between asylum authorities and anti-trafficking actors and to ensure that victims have access to assistance and protection.

D. Protection from violence against women and girls

32. Conflict and displacement increased the risk of gender-based violence, particularly for women and girls. UNHCR and partners sought to prevent, mitigate and respond to violence against women and girls through community outreach and improvement in the quality of support services. The organization also strengthened partnerships with local organizations, including those led by displaced women which often serve as front-line responders. Programmes to address gender-based violence, including the provision of lifesaving assistance, reached over 1.7 million people in 86 countries, including nearly 1 million refugees in Bangladesh, South Sudan and Uganda. Additionally, 514,000 internally displaced persons were reached in 20 countries, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and the Syrian Arab Republic. Specialists were deployed to 10 emergencies to establish or strengthen programming and coordination, including in Chad, Lebanon, Mauritania, Panama, South Sudan and Yemen. Targeted initiatives helped address the needs of adolescent girls in Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Zimbabwe, as well as in Curaçao.

33. Many initiatives to prevent and respond to gender-based violence are being severely affected by funding cuts. Programmes aimed at preventing violence against women in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali and Nigeria have already

been drastically reduced. In South Sudan, access to medical care, legal assistance and economic support to 80,000 women and girls at-risk of violence has significantly diminished.

E. Specific needs

34. UNHCR upheld its commitment to protection and assistance for all forcibly displaced persons through its age, gender and diversity approach. In line with established United Nations system-wide commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, UNHCR supported the well-being of forcibly displaced women and girls and helped mitigate harmful coping strategies and associated protection risks.

35. UNHCR conducted individual registration and provided documentation for displaced women and girls to facilitate their access to assistance and protection services, enhance legal recognition and help reduce vulnerabilities to exploitation and abuse.

36. In 2024, women comprised 54 per cent of those benefiting from UNHCR livelihood and economic inclusion programmes, including skills development, entrepreneurship support and access to financial services. These initiatives enabled women to secure decent work and improve their economic status. UNHCR also prioritized women as primary recipients and collectors of cash assistance, promoting autonomy and financial inclusion, including in Afghanistan, Lebanon, South Sudan and Ukraine. Additionally, 58 per cent of all health consultations supported by UNHCR in 2024 were provided to women and girls, with maternal health services contributing to improved protection for pregnant women and their children, ensuring safer pregnancies and healthier births.

37. UNHCR promoted the participation of displaced women in decision-making, with 46 per cent of reporting countries achieving or surpassing 50 per cent female representation in leadership structures. It continued to invest in women-led organizations, which constituted 18 per cent of all funded partners, to advance community-driven solutions and inclusive local leadership. However, this support is being severely affected due to funding cuts. UNHCR also contributed to inter-agency initiatives, notably the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund, which supports women's participation in peacebuilding and humanitarian action.

38. Targeted support for older persons was provided across 40 countries, aimed at overcoming barriers to accessing assistance and services caused by limited mobility, lack of accessible information, and social stigmatization or exclusion. Cash assistance programmes were prioritized for older persons, helping them meet their basic needs and enhance self-reliance. In Egypt, UNHCR reinforced protection mechanisms, with a focus on older persons at risk. Collaboration with national systems was key to improving older refugees' access to national social protection programmes.

39. Over 93,000 adults and 18,000 children with disabilities were reached through inclusive programmes and targeted interventions, including cash assistance, rehabilitation and assistive devices, accessible shelter, support for access to education and employment opportunities, as well as mental health and psychosocial support. However, funding cuts are limiting the ability of UNHCR to respond to these needs.

F. Child protection and education

40. Approximately 400 million children, or one in every five of the world's children, are refugees or live in conflict zones. UNHCR and partners addressed critical protection needs for 1.5 million displaced children, providing core protection services to at-risk children, their parents and caregivers in 78 countries. Unaccompanied and separated children were supported through best interest procedures, family tracing and reunification, alternative care and initiatives to strengthen the role of children, families and communities in addressing child protection risks.

41. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR intensified efforts to promote inclusion for refugee children in national child protection systems, including through the child protection index. UNHCR also contributed to training for national social

service personnel, enhancing knowledge and skills in relation to child protection needs, including for those in mixed movements.

42. UNHCR helped address protection risks associated with child marriage. In partnership with Plan International, it provided remote and in-country support in 13 countries, focusing on context-specific advocacy and community-driven prevention and response. UNHCR also promoted child-friendly approaches to registration, refugee status determination, durable solutions and family reunification for at-risk and married children, while advocating for secondary education to help prevent child marriage. However, funding reductions will hamper efforts to provide protection and assistance to vulnerable children.

43. Early education for refugees plays a critical role in building long-term resilience by addressing mental health, promoting life skills and supporting emotional needs. Of the 14.8 million school-aged refugee children worldwide, approximately 49 per cent were out of school.

44. Together with partners, UNHCR promoted a rapid return to learning and sustainable inclusion in national education systems, including through connected education and digital learning. In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, the refugee education integration policy enabled the enrolment of refugee children in public schools. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania, the Instant Network Schools programme, a collaboration with the Vodafone Foundation, reached more than 100,000 students and almost 2,000 teachers. UNHCR also worked with States and partners to support the inclusion of Ukrainian refugee children and youth in national education systems. However, funding cuts threaten to reverse the progress already made, potentially leaving hundreds of thousands without access to schooling. In 2024, the World Bank's Inclusion Support Programme for Refugee Education leveraged financing for education in Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan.

45. Despite progress in expanding access to primary education for refugee children, access to secondary education and the retention of girls remained challenging. UNHCR piloted a range of initiatives to address this, including establishing childcare centres in Ethiopia to enable young mothers to attend school; supporting adolescent clubs in Iraq to address life skills and provide educational motivation; and providing travel stipends and accelerated learning programmes in Pakistan. In addition, collaboration between education and child protection sectors, including through sports for protection initiatives implemented in countries such as Ethiopia, Malawi, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania, helped promote physical and psychosocial well-being, social inclusion and cohesion in schools.

46. The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (known as DAFI), a flagship tertiary education scholarship programme, supported 7,890 refugee students, 45 per cent of whom were female, to pursue higher education in accredited institutions across 58 countries.

Chapter IV

Statelessness

47. In 2024, an estimated 4.4 million people were either stateless or of undetermined nationality based on data received from 101 countries. As data was unavailable for just under half of all countries and with limitations in the data provided by some reporting countries, the actual number of stateless persons is likely much higher.

48. The 10-year #IBelong campaign to end statelessness which concluded in 2024 supported significant progress in all regions, resulting in positive legal and policy developments for stateless people. Building on this progress, UNHCR launched the Global Alliance to End Statelessness in October 2024. The Global Alliance aims to create a world free from statelessness, where everyone has the right to a nationality without discrimination. It currently comprises over 140 members from governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations partners and stateless-led organizations.

49. Several countries took action to end statelessness in 2024. In Thailand, a Cabinet resolution will accelerate nationality and legal status applications for long-term residents and children born on its territory. Turkmenistan announced the resolution of all known cases of statelessness on its territory, having granted citizenship to more than 32,000 persons, including refugees and stateless persons in the past two decades. Turkmenistan also established a statelessness determination procedure and included safeguards in its nationality law to prevent future statelessness. Malaysia made significant progress in the area of gender-equal nationality rights, with a constitutional amendment bill that allows Malaysian women to confer nationality to their children born abroad on an equal basis with men.

50. A joint UNHCR and World Bank socioeconomic study conducted in Kenya generated critical evidence on the socioeconomic benefits of granting citizenship to stateless individuals. The study compared the socioeconomic situation of the Shona community before and after they were granted citizenship, offering data on the transformative effects of legal recognition. The study serves as positive evidence for resolving statelessness worldwide. Also in Kenya, over 2,000 individuals from the stateless Rundi and Rwandan communities were recorded in community self-registers, with the objective of advancing nationality opportunities.

51. South Sudan acceded to both the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Slovenia acceded to the 1961 Convention, building on its commitment as a party to the 1954 Convention. The Republic of the Congo finalized procedures to accede to both conventions, fulfilling long-standing pledges.

52. Several countries strengthened laws and policies to improve the enjoyment of rights by stateless persons. In Colombia, a resolution regulating the statelessness determination procedure was issued, in line with draft articles on the protection of stateless persons and the facilities for their naturalization developed by UNHCR to assist States. Montenegro amended its law on free legal aid to enhance access by stateless persons to legal assistance, particularly in matters concerning social and child protection.

53. Regional entities also demonstrated their support to addressing statelessness. The League of Arab States launched the Arab Declaration on Belonging and Legal Identity, strengthening birth registration systems and advancing legal identity rights, with a focus on women's rights. In the Americas, the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024-2034 reaffirmed the right to nationality and the commitment of States to concrete measures to prevent and resolve statelessness. Moreover, the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registration, Identity and Vital Statistics adopted the São Paulo Declaration, emphasizing universal birth registration and the right to identity.

Chapter V

Solutions

A. Voluntary repatriation and return

54. In 2024, 9.8 million displaced persons returned to their areas or countries of origin. This includes 8.2 million internally displaced persons and 1.6 million refugees. The refugee returns were to only four countries (Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, South Sudan and Ukraine), with returns often taking place in adverse conditions.

55. As of mid-2025, over 640,000 Syrians were able to return voluntarily from neighbouring countries, including with support from UNHCR and partners. However, greater support to rebuild homes, schools and other vital infrastructure is urgently needed to make these returns sustainable. While UNHCR has moved towards facilitating voluntary returns, it continues to draw attention to the challenges and risks for civilians and humanitarian operations posed by years of protracted conflict. In this uncertain context, UNHCR called on States to allow civilians fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic to access territory, uphold the right to seek asylum, respect the principle of non-refoulement and maintain protection space for refugees who remain in host countries.

56. In the Central African Republic, following the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and the restoration of security in certain areas, an increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons returned home – despite ongoing insecurity and severe weather events that continued to drive displacement. In October 2024, a tripartite agreement was signed by the Central African Republic, Chad and UNHCR to facilitate the return of Central African refugees. To support this, a survey was initiated in early 2025 to assess intentions, needs and challenges for the return of the 138,000 refugees in southern Chad.

57. Approximately 17,700 Cameroonian refugees returned home with cash assistance from UNHCR. While strategies and action plans on durable solutions to displacement were adopted by Nigeria in the States of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, international support remains essential to finance efforts to ensure the sustainability of returns. The private sector played a vital role in supporting sustainable return, as highlighted during the 2024 Africa Roundtable on Private Sector Solutions to Internal Displacement, co-organized by UNHCR, the Nigerian Government and the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement.

58. In the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, approximately 445,000 refugees from Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan returned to their countries of origin. While their reintegration has the potential to stimulate economic growth and foster political stability, the countries of return require greater support and resources. In the southern Africa region, over 9,700 individuals were repatriated mainly to Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

59. Following large-scale returns in adverse circumstances to Afghanistan from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, UNHCR and partners provided support to returnees. However, inadequate resources hindered reintegration, as the capacity for Afghanistan to reabsorb them remain a challenge. Equally, resources are increasingly stretched in the host States, whose continued protection space is vital. UNHCR calls for increased support from the international community in this regard. An effective migration governance system is also essential.

B. Local integration

60. According to data received from 26 refugee hosting countries, approximately 88,900 refugees from 173 countries acquired citizenship or were granted permanent residency, a substantial increase from 30,800 in 2023. This was attributed to the improved reporting of data on naturalization, rather than a change in policy. An amnesty programme in Belize offered an alternative pathway to permanent residency, providing some 500 asylum-seekers with residency cards and granting them access to rights, services and a path towards future naturalization. Local integration remained a priority in the Americas. UNHCR supported regularization processes in Colombia and Ecuador, while Uruguay facilitated residency permits for 4,500 asylum-seekers, half of whom have been regularized and integrated.

C. Resettlement and complementary pathways

61. Resettlement places dramatically declined, with some States prioritizing considerations such as foreign policy objectives and integration potential over immediate protection risks and vulnerabilities. Although the resettlement arrivals were 19 per cent higher than in 2023, they accounted for only 8 per cent of the estimated 2.4 million individuals identified by UNHCR as in need of resettlement in 2024. The United States of America led global resettlement efforts, receiving 105,500 refugees, followed by Canada (49,300), Australia (17,200) and Germany (5,600). The entry into force of the European Union resettlement and humanitarian admission framework regulation was a positive development, providing common procedures to enhance safe and legal pathways to protection. Resettlement places dropped in 2025 to just over 30,000, leaving individuals with acute protection needs without options and diminishing the contribution that third country solutions make to global solidarity with hosting countries.

62. Skills-based pathways and family reunification enable refugees to move safely from a first asylum country to another. In this context, UNHCR released operational and legal guidance on family reunification for displaced persons and operational guidance on complementary pathways that advocates for the inclusion of refugees in global migration frameworks. In the Sudan, even amid ongoing conflict, UNHCR assisted Sudanese nationals and refugees to be reunited with family members in other countries. UNHCR and IOM developed a joint train-to-hire project for refugee labour mobility in Australia. Similarly, Italy created a safe new labour pathway for refugees to join the workforce by enabling them to relocate on work visas after receiving training in countries of asylum. Skills-based complementary pathway programmes were also launched in Australia and Slovenia, helping refugees access solutions and secure their future, while over 20 universities across Africa granted scholarships for the admission of refugees registered in other countries to pursue higher education.

63. In 2024, the UNHCR Executive Committee adopted a conclusion on international protection on durable solutions and complementary pathways, reflecting political will to make advancements in this area. The conclusion recognized complementary pathways as a facilitator for durable solutions and stressed the importance of enabling factors, such as the issuance of refugee travel documents. Many refugees are unable to travel outside their asylum countries, as just over half of countries globally issue machine-readable travel documents, notwithstanding related obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. To address this gap in the issuance, accessibility and acceptance of refugee travel documents, UNHCR and the University of Essex, supported by the International Civil Aviation Organization, worked on an initiative to develop and update relevant guidance on international standards and strengthen operational support, multi-stakeholder engagement and advocacy in this area.

64. UNHCR, together with partners involved in the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, launched the Global Sponsorship Fund. This aims to support sponsor groups and coordinating organizations in establishing and maintaining sponsorship-based pathways in various regions of the world. UNHCR supported the Government of Brazil in the design of a new sponsorship pathway for Afghan refugees, with the first arrivals from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan in 2025.

Chapter VI

Partnerships and key initiatives

65. In line with the High Commissioner's strategic directions 2022-2026 and the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR continued to diversify its partnerships and strengthen collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In doing so, it sought to respect the following tenets: placing affected populations at the centre of the response; upholding protection principles; championing localization; assisting governments to coordinate the international response to forced displacement and statelessness; and promoting inclusion in development responses.

66. Reflecting a shift towards sustainable responses, UNHCR supports nationally-led strategies that encourage self-reliance and inclusion. Kenya's Shirika Plan, a landmark initiative, transitions the country's refugee camps into integrated settlements, where refugees and local communities enjoy greater economic opportunities and access to improved health, education and other services. In Ethiopia, the Makatet roadmap, developed with support from UNHCR, aims to facilitate refugee inclusion in health care, education and the labour market, promoting self-reliance. In Zambia, the national refugee policy is embedding inclusion in development plans, aiming to transform refugee settlements into economic hubs that benefit refugees and host communities. Similar approaches that connect settlements to broader development strategies are being adopted in other countries and regions. To sustain these efforts, additional development financing is essential.

67. Support arrangements under the Global Compact on Refugees, including national, regional and situation-specific platforms, strengthened equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing. These include the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions

Framework (known by its Spanish acronym MIRPS), the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action, the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, and the Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform. These mechanisms continue to facilitate joint planning, resource mobilization and technical cooperation across countries of origin, asylum and return, linking these initiatives to donors and development partners beyond the region.

68. The advancement of multi-stakeholder pledges made at the Global Refugee Forums, particularly those in support of inclusion in health, education, social protection and employment systems, also contribute to sustainable responses. They are helping reduce long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance, foster local economic resilience and leverage the human potential of affected communities. These include the multi-stakeholder pledges on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; economic inclusion and social protection; housing, land, and property; and peacebuilding.

A. Development actors and financial institutions

69. UNHCR has played a catalytic role in mobilizing development funding, including from international financial institutions. Its partnership with the World Bank has mobilized \$4.94 billion in investments across 20 low-income host countries since 2017 through the International Development Association Window for Host Communities and Refugees, which promotes refugee inclusion and solutions. Since 2016, \$976 million in grants have been allocated through its Global Concessional Financing Facility, enabling \$7.7 billion in concessional loans to support seven middle-income host countries.

70. The World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement continued to support the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of socioeconomic microdata to enhance evidence-based policymaking. The data supported by the Center has informed approximately \$3 billion in development investments in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ecuador, Lebanon and Yemen, and has influenced key policy decisions, including Ethiopia's decision to grant refugees the right to work. The Center also supported the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in national statistical systems, with over 100 countries reporting on progress in 2024 and 30 advancing commitments made under the multi-stakeholder pledge on inclusion in national statistical systems and surveys, co-led by the Center, the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics, and Djibouti.

71. The partnership between UNHCR and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) supported enhanced self-reliance and access to services for forcibly displaced and host communities by fostering private sector interventions. A key achievement was the development of six financial inclusion projects in Europe and Latin America. Joint regional workshops were held for managerial teams of both organizations and sectoral experts in East and West Africa to identify joint interventions aimed at promoting private sector investments. The IFC introduced a "forced displacement flag" in its internal system, enabling the institution to track investments that stimulate private sector solutions in forced displacement contexts.

72. UNHCR strengthened its partnership with the African Development Bank, particularly through regional processes in southern and central Africa and joint projects across the continent. UNHCR engaged with the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, to expand development-focused solutions for forcibly displaced populations. Resources allocated by the Global Islamic Fund for Refugees are providing education and health care services to 1,700 refugees in Egypt, potable water to 50,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad and medicines and psychosocial support to 10,000 refugees in Libya.

73. The European Union committed 10 per cent (€8 billion) of its international partnerships funding instrument to migration and forced displacement. In the Americas, the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank strengthened their engagement to align refugee and migrant responses with national development plans, promote inclusion, and mobilize multi-year investments in education, livelihoods and health.

74. Several bilateral development partners demonstrated growing commitment to integrating forced displacement in development priorities. The French Development Agency allocated \$150 million for 2023-2027 for forced displacement programming. Germany contributes approximately \$500 million annually through its Special Initiative on Displaced Persons and Host Communities, while the Kingdom of the Netherlands has committed \$860 million between 2024 and 2027 under the PROSPECTS partnership to support education, employment, social protection and basic services.

B. Inter-agency coordination

75. In 2024, UNHCR coordinated eight regional refugee response plans, covering 52 host countries — three of which were co-led with United Nations partners. The plans promoted national leadership, localization and solutions, while fostering stronger collaboration with development and peace actors, laying the foundation for sustainable responses. These plans mobilized over 1,740 partners and appealed for more than \$12.5 billion to assist approximately 33 million displaced people and 14.1 million host community members.

76. Notable progress was made on the implementation of the United Nations Common Pledge 2.0 aimed at advancing refugee inclusion in United Nations Country Team plans and national systems. Key achievements included the participation of refugees as both surveyors and respondents in the 2024 national census of Morocco and the integration of refugees in national development plans in the Republic of Moldova. United Nations Country Teams worked to align their commitments with government pledges and United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks in Chile, Mauritania and Mozambique. In Namibia, the Country Team developed a joint work plan with the Government to enhance coordination.

77. In line with the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, UNHCR helped lead high-level advocacy and political engagement and contributed financially and operationally to the newly created Global Solutions Hub, hosted by the United Nations Development Coordination Office. The Hub supports Resident Coordinator-led efforts at the country level.

78. UNHCR collaborated with United Nations partners to address challenges faced by forcibly displaced persons. UNHCR and UNICEF promoted the inclusion of refugee children in national systems through their global strategic collaboration framework established in 2023. Complementary expertise in nutrition, food security and protection was leveraged through the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub of UNHCR and the World Food Programme. UNHCR and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-led the Refugee and Resilience Response Plan in response to the Syria crisis, which now includes, for the first time in ten years, a return preparedness component. Building on their long-standing partnership, UNHCR and IOM are strengthening collaboration, including in the context of the UN80 Initiative. Recognizing the growing complexity of mixed movements of refugees and migrants, the two organizations are working on developing more strategic, forward-looking, and effective models to jointly respond to the challenges, including by working with States to operationalize the route-based approach.

79. UNHCR and the World Health Organization collaborated on key global health events to highlight the complex intersections between health, displacement and extreme weather events and disasters. UNHCR and the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS continued advocating the inclusion of refugees and forcibly displaced persons in national HIV prevention and treatment services.

80. Collaboration with the International Labour Organization expanded to more than 35 countries under the 2023–2025 Joint Action Plan. The Plan includes initiatives to address employment challenges and improve access to work for forcibly displaced and stateless persons. In collaboration with UNDP, a joint report on emerging practices to improve access to and working conditions on digital labour platforms for refugees and host communities was published.

C. Non-governmental organizations

81. UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies organized the UNHCR Global Consultations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on solutions, inclusion, and gender equality. Attended by over 200 participants, the participation of local organizations doubled, while representation from organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, as well as those led by women, increased by nearly 40 per cent. During the consultations, the regional winners of the 2024 NGO award were announced, recognizing organizations from Honduras, Malawi and the Syrian Arab Republic that lead or support forcibly displaced and stateless persons with disabilities.

82. UNHCR conducted briefings and consultations with NGOs on key policies, including climate action, mixed movements, resettlement and complementary pathways, and updated guidance on the Refugee Coordination Model. Localization guidelines were developed based on consultations with NGOs and organizations led by displaced and stateless persons, as well as with the UNHCR Advisory Board.

83. Civil society organizations played a pivotal role in advancing the Global Compact on Refugees and strengthening meaningful refugee participation in related processes. Notably, refugee-led organizations contributed to stocktaking and preparations for the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025.

D Private sector

84. In 2024, the engagement of UNHCR with the private sector reflected a strategic shift toward multi-year collaborations that extended beyond financial contributions, fostering sustainable responses and building capacity within displaced communities. UNHCR worked with businesses and philanthropists to advance durable solutions, encouraging their participation in efforts to promote economic inclusion. New approaches were also introduced to engage younger donors and emerging markets, contributing to the diversification and sustainability of revenue streams. Among notable contributions, the Mastercard Foundation committed \$25 million to expand access to education, livelihoods and economic inclusion for Sudanese refugees. The IKEA Foundation and INDITEX, a multinational clothing company, each contributed \$16 million to support long-term initiatives aimed at strengthening refugee resilience.

85. UNHCR helped expand the use of sport as a tool for protection and inclusion. New multi-year partnerships with LIV Golf and the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Legacy Fund supported programmes in 11 countries. Initiatives through the Sport for Refugees Coalition benefited 445,000 forcibly displaced people in 82 countries, engaging 2,000 clubs and refurbishing 109 sports facilities. UNHCR leveraged major sporting events to raise awareness and promote inclusion, notably through its collaboration with the Union of European Football Associations. In partnership with the International Olympic Committee, the Olympic Refuge Foundation and the International Paralympic Committee, 37 refugee athletes and eight para-athletes competed in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, winning three historic medals. UNHCR was honoured with the Olympic Laurel and the Fair Play for Peace Award in recognition of its advocacy for sport as a means of inclusion and well-being.

Chapter VII

Accountability and oversight

86. UNHCR adopted an accountability framework in 2025. Informed by recommendations from relevant oversight bodies, the framework aims to enhance the understanding and application of accountability across the organization, including with respect to efficiency, effectiveness and ethical behaviour.

87. Strong risk analysis informed decision-making across the organization, with emphasis on fraud risk management. Through the Enterprise Risk Management Service, measures were reinforced to prevent, detect and respond to fraud. This includes fraud training, which benefited more than 1,500 UNHCR staff and partners. UNHCR made progress in

institutionalizing risk management and building the capacity of personnel and partners to anticipate and address risk. These efforts were recognized by external oversight bodies.

88. UNHCR implemented austerity measures, including organizational restructuring and a reduction in workforce, in response to the financial context in 2025. These structural adjustments, guided by the Senior Executive Team within a compressed timeframe, followed a consultative process involving internal and external stakeholders, and drew on recommendations from oversight and evaluation. Recommendations from the independent evaluation of the 2024 decentralization and regionalization strategy contributed to the process.

89. Structural adjustments at Headquarters focused on streamlining divisions and management structures. Global shared services will be introduced in areas such as human resources, finance, administration and supply to centralize transactional tasks and free up resources for programme delivery. The Regional Bureau for Southern Africa will be closed, with responsibility transferring to the remaining bureaux in sub-Saharan Africa. A harmonized yet flexible structure will be maintained across the remaining six bureaux to ensure effective regional support with reduced resources. These changes will take effect in October 2025.

90. Integrity entities played a pivotal role in navigating and mitigating the impact on the workforce. The Ethics Office developed a managerial guide on preventing retaliation through ethical leadership. It also continued to support colleagues in navigating ethical dilemmas and strengthened code of conduct trainings, which reached 76 per cent of personnel in 2024.

91. The Office of the Ombudsman and Mediator advanced innovative initiatives to strengthen and encourage informal conflict resolution. These included a mediation campaign, Ubuntu community cafes, virtual missions and preventive mediation efforts. In 2024, demand for its services continued to grow, with over 230 mediations facilitated, as compared with 140 in 2023.

92. The Inspector General's Office addressed increasing misconduct complaints. A new user-friendly online complaint form, available in four different languages, enabled processing of the high volume received. It referred cases and issued reports to senior management, as appropriate, drawing attention to any systemic shortcomings. To strengthen integrity and accountability, training sessions were provided to UNHCR personnel and partners across regions. An inter-agency training for investigators new to the United Nations system helped harmonize investigative standards and foster the exchange of best practices.

93. UNHCR strengthened its operational capacity to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. This was achieved through the implementation of innovative learning activities across regions, reaching approximately a quarter of all personnel. In May 2025, an e-learning programme was launched to enhance the direct support provided through the UNHCR Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Community of Practice, an online platform enabling the exchange of resources and good practices.

94. UNHCR remained engaged in system-wide efforts to address sexual misconduct, including by extending coverage of the misconduct disclosure scheme to 16 operations. This facilitates the systematic identification of any previous sexual misconduct by applicants during recruitment. The organization maintained an active role within the United Nations Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment, driving initiatives such as the development of an updated manager's guide and an inter-agency victims reference group, to ensure that the voices of survivors were integrated in the work of the Executive Group.

95. Coherent with its multi-year evaluation strategy (2024-2027), UNHCR commissioned evaluations to assess its emergency response in the Sudan and Ukraine. The evaluations inform the organization's efforts to support solutions from the start, including collaboration with partners on localization and area-based approaches. Coordination and system-wide coherence were examined through an inter-agency evaluation in Somalia co-managed by UNHCR. The recommendations are expected to inform the ongoing United Nations reform.

Chapter VIII

Financial contributions

96. The final budget for 2024 was \$10.8 billion, including a supplementary budget for the Sudan situation. UNHCR received \$4.8 billion in voluntary contributions in 2024, similar to the level received in 2023, and \$47 million from the United Nations regular budget.

97. Seventy-eight per cent of voluntary contributions were provided by government donors and 13 per cent by the private sector. Total funds available reached \$5.2 billion, leaving a 52 per cent funding gap compared to a 48 per cent funding gap in 2023. Expenditure totalled \$4.9 billion, a decrease of 4.5 per cent over 2023.¹

98. In 2024, UNHCR faced significant uncertainty around funding, especially from some of the largest government and private donors to UNHCR. This prompted a freeze on expenditure, disrupted planning and made it harder to prioritize. While funding eventually matched 2023 levels, UNHCR faced increased earmarked, tightly earmarked and conditional funding, hampering its ability to reallocate funding to respond to emergencies worldwide.

99. The funding situation in 2025 presented further challenges and unpredictability for UNHCR, triggering severe cuts to its programmes. While the growth of private sector funding is vital for diversification, UNHCR urges Member States to provide the necessary funding to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

100. The forcibly displaced are facing a double crisis – the trauma of exile and the collapse of the support systems on which they rely for protection and solutions. The imperative of a collective and sustained commitment to address forced displacement and statelessness and respect the rights of those affected, alongside enhanced international cooperation and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, are critical in the present global context. Fostering inclusive and resilient systems that support international protection for forcibly displaced persons and that facilitate durable solutions for them is vital. The allocation of adequate resources to consolidate the shift towards sustainable responses and to support refugee-hosting countries are equally essential.

101. The Global Compact on Refugees remains essential to the organization's efforts to seek solutions to forced displacement. It will continue to guide the actions of UNHCR amid growing financial constraints and rising challenges to the fundamental principle of multilateralism that underpins collective action to address forced displacement. The ongoing commitment and support of a broad range of partners to implement the Global Compact on Refugees will remain vital for the foreseeable future. The Global Refugee Forum Progress Review in December 2025 will be a critical opportunity to demonstrate unity and solidarity with forcibly displaced persons, reaffirm collective commitments and galvanize further momentum.

¹ For more information on budget and expenditure for 2024, see:
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/dashboards/budget-and-expenditure?year2024>.