

Foreword by the High Commissioner

The past year has continued to demonstrate that several interconnected and adverse trends force people to move. While globalization has lifted millions of people out of poverty, it has also accentuated income differentials. Climate change and the rising incidence of natural disasters are threatening lives in many parts of the world. Competition over scarce resources has become an increasingly important factor in provoking or perpetuating armed conflicts, and rising food and energy prices are compounding social and political instability.

The international community will need to focus on this confluence of issues and seek answers to the new challenges of forced displacement. Despite concerted efforts to find durable solutions, the number of refugees worldwide is on the rise for the second year. In 2007, this figure rose to 11.4 million. Similarly, the number of people affected by conflict-induced internal displacement increased to 26 million; today, UNHCR is working with some 14 million of them in 28 countries.

This upward trend is continuing, as manifested by the number of emergency deployments by UNHCR. Since the beginning of 2007, UNHCR deployed 410 staff to

emergency operations in over 40 countries. More staff have already been deployed on emergency missions so far in 2008, than in the two previous years. Spending on emergencies from UNHCR's Operational Reserve increased from USD 34 million in 2006 to over USD 87 million in 2007, and will reach some USD 150 million by the end of 2008.

In addition to responding to the increasing demands generated by emerging and deepening crises, UNHCR is reinvigorating the search for durable solutions, especially for those in protracted situations. In 2007, more than 700,000 refugees were able to realize their wish to return home, with UNHCR's help. Thousands of refugees worldwide have benefited from local integration. In addition, more than 100,000 refugees were referred for resettlement during the first nine months of 2008.

However, more needs to be done to consolidate solutions, particularly for those refugees who have returned home and who participate in the reconstruction and peacebuilding processes in their countries. Living conditions in returnee areas are often precarious.



The High Commissioner speaks to a refugee family in Dadaab, Kenya.

UNHCR/B. Bamon

UNHCR does not have the capacity and resources to provide all the essential elements to make return and reintegration sustainable. Rather, return and reintegration must be built into national recovery strategies, development frameworks and peacebuilding processes.

Protection is at the heart of all UNHCR's activities. In a number of locations, the operationalizing of the 10-Point Plan of Action will make sure that people in need of international protection are identified in broader migration flows. UNHCR is working to preserve protection space by promoting asylum legislation and procedures that are in line with international standards. Furthermore, the prevention of and response to the problem of sexual and gender-based violence remain central to our protection work. The Office will also continue efforts to address statelessness — a largely unrecognized scourge which affects millions of people throughout the world.

UNHCR is continuing its internal reform process with the aim of becoming more effective, efficient, and agile, and hence more responsive to the needs of its beneficiaries. A greater percentage of its expenditure has been redirected to operations: from 47.7 per cent of the total expenditure in 2006 to 54.1 per cent in 2007. Headquarters functions have been streamlined in order to direct more resources and energy to the Field. At the beginning of 2006, there were 1,047 staff members based in Geneva; today that figure stands at 747. The reform process should be complete by mid-2009, although UNHCR will continue to look at possibilities for improvement.

Savings have allowed the allocation of an additional USD 15 million to address crucial gaps in the areas of malaria, malnutrition and reproductive health, as well as prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence in 19 countries. These projects have now been mainstreamed and a further USD 7 million has been made available for new initiatives, focusing efforts on addressing micronutrient deficiencies and crucial gaps in

water and sanitation. Resources have also been allocated to strengthen operations where field presence and activities have proved insufficient to meet the needs of the people the Office cares for, as, for example in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

UNHCR's current efforts cannot fully address the needs of the people it cares for. This is why, as part of the 2009 planning process, offices in eight pilot countries were requested to base their planning on the estimated needs of each population of concern, rather than on the expected support from donors. The 2009 revised Annual Programme Budget reflects the findings of this Global Needs Assessment exercise for these eight countries. The Global Needs Assessment approach will be applied to the rest of UNHCR's operations in the near future.

This Global Appeal sets out priorities for the coming year by highlighting the changes that have taken place since the 2008-2009 biennial budget was approved. In spite of efforts to minimize costs, UNHCR's budget will not cover the needs of its beneficiaries. With increasing food and energy prices, their welfare is seriously at risk. At the same time, the Office is asked to do more and to respond to greater demands.

I am confident that donors will continue to respond positively to this Appeal despite the current financial and economic environment. For it would be tragic if the funds available for humanitarian assistance were to decline at the very time when the needs are increasing so dramatically.

I thank you for your continued support.

António Guterres

