

ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
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BACKGROUND PAPER

Session title: Regional Session, Regional Bureau for Africa

Date: 15 June 2016

Time/Room: 16:30 – 18:30, Room 4

Since the Annual Consultations with NGOs were held last July, the African continent has, fortunately, seen no new major eruption of crisis. Rather, those situations of forced displacement that occurred in the recent past (South Sudan, CAR, Nigeria, Mozambique and Burundi in particular) seem to have settled into a pattern of sporadic and unpredictable fighting, punctuated by calmer periods in some regions. People are still forced to flee, particularly into remote and inaccessible areas, while only a handful have chosen to return to areas still embroiled in insecurity.

The Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Africa has made repeated strong pleas to the international community not to forget Africa in the rush to aid and ameliorate the suffering of refugees fleeing conflict into Europe. Much of the world's attention has been diverted to that terrible crisis, and it is difficult to make the argument that crises on the brink of being forgotten deserve more attention than others. Nevertheless, Africa risks losing generation after generation of intelligent, resourceful and keen youth who would, under normal circumstances, be healthy, happy, actively contributing members of families, communities, the local and national economies to conflicts that have dragged on for years.

The global financial downturn, sinking oil prices, flagging donor response, and re-direction of needed humanitarian aid to the situation in Europe has depleted UNHCR's resources beyond the most immediate lifesaving efforts of water, food, healthcare and shelter. The Bureau's two top priorities that are not within these lifesaving goals – namely education and livelihoods – are the two that can most critically protect youth from a spiral of lifelong poverty. It is estimated that in 2016, refugees in Africa receive only \$0.20 cents per person per day in assistance- which leaves very little space for initiatives such as training in modern agribusiness, IT, small-business start-up, etc. These modern building blocks that would give young people hope, a sustainable future, and a way to provide for themselves and their families, are being denied.

The discussion during this year's NGO Consultations, while providing the audience an update on the current situation in sub-Saharan Africa, with regional specialists covering particularly pertinent issues, will aim to consider more in depth the situation of youth in and outside of camps. The first hour of this year's Africa session will feature the Director for UNHCR's Bureau for Africa, Mr. Valentin Tapsoba, giving an overview of Africa's current displacement landscape, joined by the

three Regional Deputy Directors: Ms. Ann Encontre for the East and Horn of Africa (and Regional Refugee Coordinator for the South Sudan Situation, and the Yemen Situation as it affects the Horn of Africa), Ms. Noriko Yoshida for Southern Africa and the Great Lakes including the Burundi Situation, and Ms. Millicent Mutuli, for West Africa and Central Africa, including the CAR and Nigeria Situations.

The second part of the session will focus on this years' theme, where the Bureau will cede its traditional 'space' to allow us to better hear the voices of those who most immediately affected by our discussions. Led by UNHCR celebrity supporter Octopizzo (Mr. Henri Ohanga), himself growing up in Nairobi's Kibera suburb, he has used his fame and following to support South Sudanese youth in Kakuma Camp, Kenya. We will also hear from the two youth leaders from COBURWAS, an international NGO in Kampala aimed at transforming African youth. These young leaders co-directed the Regional Youth Consultations, held in Kampala 10-13 November 2015, in the build-up to this years' NGO Consultations. They will provide the main outcomes of the Regional Youth Consultations, and provide some recommendations for moving forward. Following their presentation, refugees from camps in Uganda and elsewhere will give us a clearer picture of life in and out of refugee camps, through their eyes and with their unique perspective. Finally, a young lady who left Africa as a girl will share her experiences in adjusting to life as a refugee / new citizen in the US, her challenges, cultural adjustments, and achievements in overcoming the harrowing experiences of forced displacement as a child.

RBA 30 May 2016