

**Introductory Remarks of Steven Corliss  
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Global programmes (EC/68/SC/CRP.3)**

**68<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**

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Thank you, Madame Chairperson,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm pleased to appear before this 68<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee to introduce the update on UNHCR's Global Programmes.

The Global Programmes reinforce our protection and solutions work in the field across a very broad range of operational activities. These include public health; HIV and reproductive health; nutrition and food security; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); shelter and settlements; education; livelihoods, energy and environment; registration and identity management; information management and cash-based interventions, as well as UNHCR's engagement as co-lead of the Global Shelter Cluster and Global Camp Coordination & Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster; and our growing cooperation with development partners and the operational dimensions of solutions.

The Global Programmes are strongly aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They support our efforts to implement the World Humanitarian Summit outcomes and our Grand Bargain commitments, and they take forward the vision of the New York Declaration and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. The Global Programmes are also founded on UNHCR's Strategic Directions for 2017—2021.

Through the Global Programmes, UNHCR launched five-year Global Strategies for public health, settlement and shelter, livelihoods and safe access to fuel and energy (SAFE) in 2014. Today, we are sharing with the Committee our third annual progress report on implementation of the Global Strategies. The report presents the key achievements and the challenges we have faced in an interesting and accessible way.

My presentation will speak to UNHCR's Global Programmes in relation to three key themes: first, rapid, agile and effective emergency response; second, improving lives through programme quality, technical integrity and innovation; and, third, promoting inclusive, sustainable and development-oriented responses.

Let me begin where the Global Programmes matter most – saving lives in emergencies.

In the area of health, we can report some positive results and a few very worrying trends. Effective monitoring and strong technical support through the Global Programmes helped government authorities, UNHCR and partners to manage cholera outbreaks in the Dadaab camps in Kenya and among newly-arrived South Sudanese refugees and host communities in Uganda. Through quick action, we also ensured the resumption of anti-retroviral therapy for 1,950 South Sudanese refugees who entered the Democratic Republic of Congo. We also extended services to local people who did not have access before. For people living with HIV, continuity in treatment is a matter of life and death.

As highlighted yesterday by the distinguished delegate of Togo, speaking on behalf of the African Group, we are encouraged that mortality rates among children under 5 years old were at acceptable levels in 99 percent of all operations, including emergencies. Last year, I noted that we consider under-5 mortality to be a "bellwether" indicator for the health of the broader refugee population. Let me flag that these positive results may not continue in 2017. The combination of drought, conflict and challenges with humanitarian access are causing a precipitous deterioration of food security in Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, northeast Nigeria and elsewhere.

So the positive news is that we kept children alive last year. The bad news is that poor nutrition is robbing them of their futures. Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates among refugee children are far too high – as high as 75 percent among refugees arriving from Somalia to Ethiopia. The emergency threshold is only 15 percent. Stunting among refugee children exceeded the critical level – 30 percent – in nearly two-thirds of all sites monitored. None of the 160 sites reported acceptable child anaemia levels. This will have long-term impacts on their health and development.

The Assistant High Commissioner for Operations and the Director of the Africa Bureau have already drawn your attention to the chronic shortfalls in food assistance facing refugees, particularly in the East and Horn of Africa. Ration cuts ranged from 14 to 75 percent during 2016. UNHCR and WFP are working to implement our joint self-reliance strategy, and we are developing targeting approaches to make the best use of limited resources, but nearly five million refugees in thirty countries continued to rely upon food assistance in 2016. Greater, sustained and more predictable funding is needed.

Food assistance alone will not solve the challenges of poor nutrition. A comprehensive multi-sectoral approach is needed. The Infant and Young Child Feeding framework that UNHCR developed in collaboration with Save the Children has shown success in saving the lives of the most vulnerable. Ensuring access to clean water, decent sanitation and adequate shelter, coupled with such related interventions as malaria control and treatment programmes, are all “building blocks” needed to improve the nutritional status of children.

The Global Programmes contributed to emergency response across a range of other technical sectors. Shelter experts and site planners deployed through the Global Programmes worked to improve living conditions for refugees and internally-displaced people in eight emergency operations, including in urban areas. Registration specialists deployed to UNHCR operations in Ethiopia, Greece and Uganda, and information management experts on mission supported the emergency response in Libya, Nigeria and Ukraine.

Beyond emergencies, UNHCR’s Global Programmes drive efforts to strengthen technical quality and integrity through innovative approaches that improve lives and make our operations more efficient and effective. I will provide a few examples.

The Global Programmes are helping to give refugees sustainable access to energy. Together with CARE, UNHCR is introducing bottled gas for cooking in Niger through a private sector partnership. We are now working to expand the initiative to Chad. Moving away from firewood yields protection, health and environmental benefits and enables refugee women and children to use the time saved on collecting fuel to build livelihoods activities and go to school.

In Nepal, UNHCR has partnered with Engineers without Borders and the refugee community – with support from the IKEA Foundation – to install mini-grids for solar street lighting that now illuminates 116 streets in and around two camps. The larger-scale solar farm that will power the Azraq camp in Jordan is ready to be put into service, which will save millions and also reduce carbon emissions significantly.

We are expanding the use of efficient renewable energy solutions in both emergencies and stable operations. In Uganda, we introduced solar-powered boreholes in the Bidibidi settlement and Rhino camp. This required a greater upfront investment, but we expect to realise savings of up to 80 percent on operating costs. The hybrid solar-diesel pumps that we installed for boreholes in the Dadaab camps in Kenya and the Nyaragusu and Nduta camps in Tanzania will yield savings of 50 percent through reduced fuel costs.

Last year, UNHCR expanded the use of innovative, cost-effective and environmentally friendly approaches to sanitation. New efficient latrines in Mahama camp in Rwanda only need half a litre of water per use. The Urine Diversion Dry Toilets (UDDT) introduced in refugee camps in Dollo Ado and Gambella in Ethiopia reduce waste volumes by up to 90 percent.

We are also constantly seeking to improve and innovate in the area of humanitarian shelter through the Global Programmes. This month, UNHCR will launch the new self-standing family tent, which we developed together with IFRC and ICRC. With support from the IKEA Foundation, we are working with Better Shelter, a social enterprise, to redesign the Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) and improve its fire safety performance. The new model RHU is expected to enter production later this year.

We see effective identity management as the foundation of protection and the key to ensuring integrity in UNHCR’s assistance and solutions work. UNHCR is accelerating the global deployment of *proGres in Partnership*, our upgraded registration and case management system, which is now used in fifteen operations. More than three million refugees have now been enrolled in UNHCR’s Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) – our global biometric solution – or in IrisGuard, which is used in the Syria situation.

Let me also update you on our decisive steps to expand the use of cash assistance in UNHCR's global operations. The UNHCR Policy on Cash-Based Interventions and the companion five-year institutionalisation strategy launched last year have consolidated our ongoing efforts to make UNHCR "cash enabled" at every level. The June session of the Standing Committee will provide an opportunity for a dedicated discussion on cash, so I will limit myself to a few highlights today.

As the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations noted, we are making significant progress in scaling up the use of cash and in delivering on our Grand Bargain commitments. UNHCR transferred more than USD 500 million in cash assistance last year, reflecting a significant increase over 2015. We are also seeing real efficiency gains. Our cost analysis indicates that, in our largest programmes, 90 percent or more of the resources programmed for cash went directly into the pockets of refugees.

UNHCR is committed to pursuing an open and collaborative approach to cash with our partners, including WFP, our key strategic partner, and the NGOs and civil society actors that strengthen our link to the people we protect and assist. We are also keen to explore ways to build upon national social safety net schemes, where possible, as a platform for delivering cash to refugees and other people of concern.

UNHCR is pursuing cash transfer arrangements that provide equal, direct and shared access to all humanitarian partners. We call this "white labelling." The Jordan operation pioneered the approach through the Common Cash Facility, and we are now introducing it in Greece. This allows all agencies to transfer cash through the same banking arrangements and share the efficiency gains, without having a single agency act as an intermediary or forcing a consolidation that loses humanitarian expertise and capacities.

Finally, I will speak to the ways that the Global Programmes support more inclusive, sustainable and development-oriented responses to forced displacement.

We were very encouraged to see the principal lines of action set out in UNHCR's Policy on Alternatives to Camps and the Global Strategies – which we issued in 2014 – resonate so strongly last year at the World Humanitarian Summit, through the Grand Bargain and in New York Declaration. They now form an integral part of UNHCR's Strategic Directions for 2017 to 2021.

These key directions include pursuing synergies with national development planning, multi-year planning and budgeting, mainstreaming service delivery through national systems in such areas as education, healthcare and water and sanitation, enabling refugees to participate in the economy and build sustainable livelihoods and allowing them to settle in communities rather than camps. I will highlight a few examples.

In 2016, UNHCR completed a three-year plan to transfer the management of refugee health clinics to the Government of Ghana. This is a success story but it also illustrates that mainstreaming service delivery takes time. As noted yesterday in the African Group statement, UNHCR is pursuing multi-year strategies to include refugees in national health and social insurance schemes in several countries on the continent. Progress in education has been striking. Refugee children had access to national schools in 64 countries at the end of 2016. This year, UNHCR will work with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to include refugee children in national school systems in nine countries in Africa.

UNHCR is partnering in new ways with national governments and development actors to strengthen basic services in ways that yield sustainable benefits for both refugees and host communities. In Lebanon, UNHCR and the European Commission's DG DEVCO are collaborating on a USD 20 million project to upgrade water systems in urban areas hosting refugees, including installing new boreholes, extending piped networks, adding additional household connections and building new reservoirs.

Global Programmes support has also been instrumental to developing UNHCR's professionalised, market-based approach to livelihoods. The Graduation Approach to livelihoods is showing success helping people to meet their most basic needs, achieve financial inclusion and participate in the economy. For example, in Ecuador, among extremely poor refugees and local people participating in the Graduation Approach, 81 percent were eating three meals a day after six months, up from only 17 percent, while 30 percent had bank

accounts, compared with 10 percent before they entered the programme. In Costa Rica, unemployment among participants dropped from 36 percent to 4 percent and self-employment more than doubled. We are seeking other pathways to promote financial inclusion, including access to microcredit. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has agreed to launch a USD 15 million partial Credit Guarantee Facility (CGF). Through the facility, SIDA will cover 50 percent of losses on lending to refugees – who otherwise cannot get loans – working initially through Financial Service Providers targeting refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Kenya and Uganda.

Our work with refugee artisans – helping them to develop and refine their products and connect them to global markets – are also achieving results. Malian refugees in Burkina Faso are now able to sell their products through online retailers and in stores in Europe. You can see some of these beautifully-crafted items in the market space outside the conference room.

Before closing, let me say a word about our growing collaboration with the World Bank.

The World Bank's 2016 flagship report *Forcibly Displaced: Toward a Development Approach Supporting Refugees, the Internally Displaced, and their Hosts* – to which UNHCR was an important contributor – and a range of regional, country and thematic studies have demonstrated the complementary strengths of our agencies. Moving from analytical work to action, UNHCR is joining World Bank missions to the countries eligible for financing under the special USD 2 billion IDA 2018 allocation for refugees and host communities, which will contribute to setting national priorities for this funding.

We are committed to working more closely and effectively with development partners and processes. To achieve this, UNHCR needs to change and adapt the way we work across several fronts.

Madame Chairperson, let me conclude here. I hope that my remarks have given the Committee a sense of the scope and importance of the work supported by UNHCR's Global Programmes. As always, I look forward to hearing the Committee's views and answering any questions that you may have, together with my colleague Ms. Law.

Thank you.