

Item 3 (d)

68th meeting of the Standing Committee Emergency Preparedness and response (EC/68/SC/CRP.5)

Introductory Statement of Mr. Ahmed Warsame Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply (DESS)

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Madam Chair, Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to be with you this morning as I have assumed my new role as UNHCR Director of Emergencies, Security and Supply Management this January, having previously held several positions in various operations, including as UNHCR Representative in the Republic of South Sudan, as Head of Operations in Dadaab, Kenya and as Head of Sub-Office Peshawar, Pakistan. I pledge my commitment to build upon the achievements of DESS which were realized under the leadership of my predecessor Terry Morel.

Every two years, UNHCR provides an update on its emergency preparedness and response. Sadly, the global humanitarian situation hasn't improved since 2015 when more than 65 million people had been displaced, which is the highest in decades. By mid-2016, some 3.2 million people were newly displaced with the conflicts in Syria and South Sudan generating the most new refugee arrivals. These figures speak for themselves, and show that protection and humanitarian

assistance to refugees, displaced persons and others of concern, is needed to be carried out in a neutral, impartial and independent manner.

UNHCR has continued to deliver immediate protection and life-saving support in simultaneous and complex protracted emergencies, often times in high-risk environment and conflict areas. The system-wide L3 emergency declarations for Syria, Iraq and Yemen continue to be extended, the last time two weeks ago for another 6 months. Currently, six UNHCR emergency declarations cover more than 25 countries that are affected by large-scale displacement of refugees and IDPs. This trend represents that the needs are far too great than ever. The increasing politicization of some emergencies, the shrinking humanitarian space, and restrictions on humanitarian access furthermore impede the protection of affected populations.

Emergency preparedness and response is one of the five key areas of UNHCR's Strategic Directions for 2017 -2021, and will remain at the center of UNHCR's work. Furthermore, UNHCR has also made firm commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit to meaningfully invest in these areas.

Let me sincerely express my deep appreciation to host governments and host communities for their generous reception and support to refugees. In most emergencies, the majority of displaced populations is supported by host communities who, in an extraordinary way, open their homes to provide safety and shelter. UNHCR's emergency work always must consider the contribution of the local population and find ways in which community-based support can be rendered to them on a priority basis to maintain community co-existence, harmony, and mutual socio-economic benefits.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to present you today where UNHCR stands with its emergency preparedness and response and where we intend to go.

In the last two years, UNHCR has considerably invested in emergency preparedness. We established a dedicated unit at headquarters to provide guidance and support to field operations. The High Alert List for Emergency Preparedness (HALEP) is a new tool for risk analysis, early warning and assessment of operational readiness for emergency response. In line with our WHS commitment on working closer with local actors, UNHCR conducted consultations with national and international NGOs to identify joint priorities for emergency response. These are currently being tested in the field and will be used more widely this year with a focus on identifying and complementing existing local capacities, analysis and planning, protection-centered preparedness, and capacity building. UNHCR has also been actively engaged the “Ready to Respond” initiative to strengthen inter-agency cooperation and build on best practices with OCHA, UNICEF, and WFP.

Two weeks ago, I travelled to northern Iraq and saw first-hand the complexity of the humanitarian situation around Mosul and the importance of being prepared. The humanitarian response for IDPs is taking place in an ongoing conflict zone. The situation is critical given the military operation which is currently taking place and the daily arrival of about 5,000 persons in the camps. The humanitarian community and the government had prepared early for this influx and had set up camps before the IDPs left west Mosul. Through being prepared and ready, UNHCR and partners have already assisted over 260,000

people with shelter, core relief items and protection services including more than 11,200 persons from west Mosul in the Chamakor camp.

Deploying well-trained staff to emergency operations to support the initial response in the first months is a key element to set-up protection and assistance swiftly. In 2016, more than 370 deployments supported UNHCR's emergency response with the majority in support of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, as well as to Greece, Nigeria, Niger and Iraq. This would not be possible without our stand-by agreements with partners which provided more than 40% of the deployments. Some of these agreements have been in place for 25 years now and continue to be in high demand.

Another key element in emergency response is providing protection through assistance. Last year, UNHCR dispatched core relief items worth USD 63.8 million to 31 countries from its seven Global Stockpiles which are located in Accra, Amman, Copenhagen, Douala, Dubai, Isaka, and Nairobi. The majority of the items were sent to South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Burundi, Greece and Syria. This global system of pre-positioning relief material in strategic locations enables UNHCR to respond to the needs of more than half a million people at any given time. In addition, UNHCR is exploring to establish a logistical base for East Africa in Uganda.

In 2016, UNHCR continued to strengthen the coordination of refugee responses and also working within the established IASC coordination arrangements at the global and field levels. You will receive a more detailed update on refugee coordination tomorrow morning.

Registration and documentation, Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) interventions and ensuring civilian character of refugee camps/settlements are among the priorities in emergency response. For example, in Uganda in response to the refugee influx from South Sudan, UNHCR and partners ensured profiling, reception facilities at the border, access to basic services, SGBV prevention and response, child protection, education and support of community structures.

In today's world, displaced persons are often located close to ongoing conflict and high-risk environments. UNHCR continues to maintain presence in countries such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen to deliver to persons of concern. Currently, UNHCR has 32 offices in countries designated by the UN at high and extreme security levels with some 830 staff. This illustrates the level of exposure of staff to abduction and kidnapping and other threats. We therefore call upon host governments and communities to make every effort to ensure staff and humanitarian workers are protected and allowed to continue serving those in need of protection and assistance without intimidation or harassment.

Madam Chair, now I will outline how we are moving forward.

With the changed global context, UNHCR is reviewing its emergency policy and I would like to outline the main elements of this revised policy. The objective is to enhance UNHCR's ability to respond to emergencies with greater operational flexibility, the strengthening of the Centrality of Protection, enhanced focus on field support, strengthened leadership and accountability as well as simplified internal procedures. The policy builds on lessons learnt and recent

developments and links to the inter-agency policy framework and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. It introduces an increased focus on preparedness and a Level 1 declaration which signals the urgent need to prepare actively for a likely displacement; automatic and simplified access to human, financial and material resources for all emergency levels; and an Emergency Tool Kits to provide easy access to frequently used tools and guidance. The organizational hierarchy accountability framework is also firmed up. UNHCR has initiated consultations on this revised policy with relevant stakeholders.

In 2017, UNHCR will further strengthen its preparedness and will continue to invest in capacity building for staff, partners and national actors for emergency preparedness and response. Emergency rosters for specialized functions and new emergency standby agreements will increase the rapid and effective capacity to deploy to new emergencies. The use of cash-based assistance and identifying solutions from the outset of emergency situations will be key priorities for the organization. Prevention and response to SGBV will also remain at the core of UNHCR's work.

In closing, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to you, host countries, donors and member states, who provide us with strong and consistent support for our emergency operations in form of access, legal frameworks for protection assistance, financial and material support and human capacity and resources. Our deep appreciation goes to governments and institutions who provide UNHCR with logistical support and warehousing facilities around the globe. Finally, UNHCR owns a debt of gratitude to all partners including UN agencies,

non-governmental organizations and community-based organisations without which UNHCR alone could not respond to multiple emergencies.

Thank you.