



الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية
REPUBLIQUE ALGERIENNE DEMOCRATIQUE ET POPULAIRE

MISSION PERMANENTE D'ALGERIE
AUPRES DE L'OFFICE DES NATIONS UNIES
A GENEVE ET DES ORGANISATIONS
INTERNATIONALES EN SUISSE

البعثة الدائمة للجزائر
لدى مكتب الأمم المتحدة بجنيف
والمنظمات الدولية بسويسرا

**71st session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees' Programme
(ExCom/UNHCR)
Geneva, 5-9 October 2020**

**Statement of Algeria on behalf of the African Group
-General debate-**

**Mr. Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,
Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Algeria has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

At the outset, the African Group would like to extend its sincere gratitude to you, Mr. Chair, as well as to the Bureau members for your dedication and leadership in steering the work of the ExCom.

The Group thanks UNHCR for preparing this session and commends its tireless efforts aimed at responding to the needs of refugees and other persons of concern across the world, often in harsh conditions.

Let me also thank the High Commissioner, Mr. Filippo Grandi, on behalf of the Group, for his opening statement which emphasised the landscape and drivers of global forced displacement as well as UNHCR's continued commitment, together with governments and other partners, to address the needs of the growing number of persons of concern.

The African Group seizes this opportunity to extend its appreciation to UNHCR for scaling up its efforts to assist displaced people recently affected by devastating floods in Sudan and in the Sahel Region. We call on the international community to provide the necessary support to the concerned countries in order to enable them to face the negative impact of these disasters.

**Mr. Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,**

The African Group remains deeply concerned by the raising trend of forced displacement worldwide. Despite the tremendous attention of the International community to this upsetting reality, we are saddened to note that millions of persons still cross deserts and seas to flee conflicts, political tensions and the devastating effects of natural disasters, in order to seek safety.

As outlined in various reports released this year, there were 86.5 million persons of concern to UNHCR by the end of 2019. This unprecedented total means that forced displacement is now affecting more than one per cent of humanity, with fewer and fewer of those who flee being able to return home.

These alarming figures have been compounded, in 2020, by the COVID-19 pandemic which has been posing a number of unexpected challenges to the protection of refugees and other persons of concern around the world. As the virus continues spreading, including in Africa, the severe socio-economic impact of the pandemic on vulnerable populations is becoming more evident. This situation remains a serious threat, in particular in the areas affected by conflicts, political tensions, climate change and natural disasters.

In this regard, we note with appreciation that this global health crisis has not weakened UNHCR's determination to "stay and deliver" by contributing, through its global emergency response, to support refugees, internally displaced persons, host communities and host governments. Thereby, the African Group commends UNHCR for its commitment to the global response to COVID-19 and the integration of this pandemic as a new parameter in its operations in the field.

The Group calls on UNHCR to continue working with States and partners to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern have access, without any discrimination to social services and treatment. The Group further calls on UNHCR to explore innovative solutions to mitigate protection risks and alleviate the multidimensional impact of this pandemic.

In this context, it is particularly imperative to make sure that Africa's humanitarian capacity is protected and enhanced in order to avoid turning this global health crisis into a humanitarian one. Among the 85% of the total refugees hosted by developing countries, the largest refugee population is sheltered in African countries, which continue to leave their doors open to those seeking refuge. Despite the additional burden on their economies and efforts towards national development, many of our countries still shows solidarity to high numbers of forcibly displaced persons, in the African tradition of hospitality and generosity.

Therefore, the African Group urges the international community to support comprehensive and inclusive responses to forced displacement in Africa and encourages donors to secure adequate, timely, flexible and predictable funding to support UNHCR operations in the continent.

Mr. Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of the Global Compact on Refugees and, in particular, the need for international cooperation, solidarity and burden-and responsibility-sharing in addressing global challenges.

While reiterating its strong commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees as a vital tool in addressing the refugee and other forcibly displaced person's related challenges, the African Group strongly believes that the international community needs to work together and demonstrates, more than ever, solidarity with the most vulnerable members of the society.

The Group is of the view that the current context should not be limited to fighting a pandemic. There is also an urgent need to address the root causes of forced displacement through comprehensive, sustainable and inclusive solutions.

The Group would also like to reiterate its position that international protection should include provision of stability, which enables forcibly displaced persons to preserve their dignity. At the same time, protracted situations need our full attention. We must guard against the risk that protracted refugee situations become an all familiar phenomenon. Therefore, the African Group wishes to stress that we should endeavour to bring durable solutions to the protracted situations around the world.

While recalling that the fourth objective of the Global Compact on Refugees seeks to support the creation of conditions in countries of origin that facilitate return in safety and dignity, the African Group reaffirms that voluntary repatriation remains the preferred durable solution for refugee situations.

The Group commends UNHCR's engagement with countries of origin to support conditions for safe, dignified and sustainable return. In particular, we welcome the tripartite agreements signed, in 2019, by UNHCR with a number of African countries in order to facilitate organized voluntary repatriation of refugees. We further welcome support provided to returnees to facilitate their integration into society. The Group calls on UNHCR to ensure continued support to the implementation of reintegration plans as appropriate.

Despite the progress made in a number of situations, the African Group remains concerned by the 46% decrease in voluntary repatriation in 2019. The Group calls upon the international community, as underscored in the Global Compact on Refugees, to support creating conditions conducive to voluntary, safe and sustainable return. To this end, the international community is urged to address root causes, remove obstacles to return and enable conditions favourable to voluntary repatriation.

The African Group thanks UNHCR for its continued efforts to expand third-country solutions for refugees. The launch of the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways is commendable. Being aware of the challenges faced

because of travels restrictions and border closures due to COVID-19, the Group expresses optimism that the implementation of this Strategy will result in increasing the number of resettlement places and countries, and enhancing the availability and predictability of complementary pathways for refugees.

On local solutions, the Group welcomes the progress achieved towards self-reliance and inclusion of persons of concern in national services. We take note of the measures undertaken in several countries, including African countries, to provide refugees and asylum-seekers with legal avenues to stay and enhance their socioeconomic conditions. UNHCR is encouraged to maintain this momentum by working closely with governments and other partners in order to implement the pledges made at the First Global Refugee Forum to advance integration and other local solutions.

The African Group appreciates UNHCR's efforts towards preventing and ending statelessness. While noting with concern that at least 4.2 million stateless people lived in 76 countries at the end of 2019, the Group is of the view that much remains to be done in this field in order to address statelessness in the remaining years of the "Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024", following the momentum generated by the High Level Segment on Statelessness held in October 2019.

**Mr. Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,**

Financial resources are crucial to the achievement of UNCHR's mandate.

The African Group takes note of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2020, as well as the annual budget for 2021, which has remained unchanged from the amount originally approved by the Executive Committee last year.

Despite the strong political commitment shown by African countries to increasing opportunities for durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons, needless to say that the current level of funding of UNHCR activities in Africa is not commensurate with the persons of concern hosted in our Region.

The Group notes with deep concern that the final budget for 2019 registered an underfunding affecting seriously the delivery of protection and assistance in many African programmes. It is evident that without the requisite budgetary resources, the reponse falls short of the minimum requirement for populations depending on humanitarian assistance. The Group strongly believes that funding should be commensurate with the refugee situation, and with the reality on the ground.

While donor's support is highly appreciated, the African Group reiterates its appeal to the international community to secure adequate, need-based and flexible funding for UNHCR operations in Africa. African host countries should be supported and presented with more economic opportunities to successfully assist and protect forcibly displaced persons, particularly through durable solutions, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

The African Group further calls upon the international community to increase unearmarked and softly earmarked funds to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the 2020-2021 biennial programme budgets.

Furthermore, the Group urges UNHCR to redouble its efforts in widening the donor base, in accordance with the principle of burden and responsibility sharing, and exploring innovative funding mechanisms.

**Mr. Chair,
Mr. High Commissioner,**

The African Group appreciates UNHCR's efforts aimed at transforming the Organization and making it more balanced and better equipped to improve delivery of protection and solutions for forcibly displaced persons.

In this regard, the African Group would appreciate getting more information on the challenges faced and lessons learnt in operationalizing the decentralization and regionalization process undertaken in 2019.

With regard to the new planning system, the Group looks forward to its positive impact on resource mobilization and solidarity with host countries.

In conclusion, we wish to ensure you, Mr. High Commissioner, that you have in the African Group a long-standing and trusted partner, which will continue its support to UNHCR mandate.

I thank you.