

A SUMMARY OF THE WEST/CENTRAL AFRICA ROUNDTABLE ON PROTECTION CHALLENGES

It is my pleasure to present a summary of discussions and conclusions from the Regional Roundtable on protection and development cooperation to advance solutions for forcibly displaced persons, estimated at more than 13 million and their vulnerable host communities in the West and Central African Regions.

This Roundtable which took place on October 25, 2022, in Lome, Togo in preparation for this present high-level dialogue brought together a wide range of protection and development actors across and beyond the two sub Regions. The discussions were framed around three main themes, notably 1) Local development needs in forced displacement contexts, 2) Government-led initiatives for long-term solutions and 3) International Development Cooperation Opportunities to support solutions.

It offered a precious opportunity to reflect around initiatives that can unlock solutions for the protracted displacement through enhanced development cooperation. Such needs and opportunities were explored on the basis of lessons learnt and lived experiences in the Central Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin and Central Africa.

It was equally an opportunity to emphasize on key roles played by the local actors including civil society and national actors to ease the local solutions initiatives in hosting areas and to sustain conducive environment for return or reintegration of the affected populations. It was also recognized that the impact of their efforts will continue to depend heavily on key factors, such as favourable government policies and development actors policies and priorities.

Equally discussed was the add value of the ongoing setting up of regional initiative, in particular Regional Support Platform for solutions for the 1.4 million refugees, IDPs and returnees concerned by the CAR crisis. This solutions-oriented regional mechanism stems from the Yaounde Declaration which sanctioned the Regional Ministerial Conference on the solution for CAR situation, Cameroon hosted in April 2022. The platform which is slated to launch in 2023, will have as main objective the follow up of recommendations reached out during this conference.

In light of the above, all participants at the Lome roundtable unanimously call on the role that UNHCR and Development actors could further play in accompanying countries affected by protection and protracted displacement crises to unlock solutions for the concerned populations. Recalling the recommendations of the GCR, Participants requested UNHCR and Development Partners' cooperation on the provision of educational and health facilities, the provision of adequate housing, the issuance of documentation, the access to livelihood opportunities, the implementation of policies geared at easing the inclusion of displaced persons into national plan and, the support for the effective implementation of the Regional Support Platform for solutions on the CAR displacement.