

**Emergency response, supply, and safety and security  
Remarks by the Director of Emergency and Programme Support,  
Mr. Ayaki Ito  
95<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee  
24-26 March 2026**

**Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,**

UNHCR is currently responding to several major emergencies, each marked by rapid escalation, complex humanitarian needs and significant operational constraints.

**First, on 4 March**, UNHCR declared an **L2 emergency for the Middle East Situation**, for which I was nominated as the Cross-Regional Refugee Coordinator. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, where UNHCR continues to support one of the world's largest refugee populations from Afghanistan—some 1.65 million people—UNHCR and its partners under the Refugee Response Plan are adapting the response to address the growing needs of refugees and host communities, totalling 2.8 million people, while also strengthening preparedness for potential further population movements. In Lebanon, UNHCR is responding under the Flash Appeal to provide lifesaving assistance and protection to up to 1,000,000 people, including refugees, for a period of three months. Given the volatility across the region and the possibility of onward movements to Iran's neighbouring countries, UNHCR and partners have been supporting the government concerned with preparedness measures. Together with national authorities and partners, we are reinforcing protection presence at key border points, reviewing stocks of core relief items, assessing logistics capacity for pre-positioning, and scaling up readiness for cash-based interventions across the region.

**Second**, an active **L2 emergency remains in place in Burundi** following renewed fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in December, which triggered both internal and cross-border displacement. In response to arrivals in Burundi, upon government request, UNHCR established a new site at Bweru, expanded the Musenyi settlement, and delivered

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protection services including support for survivors of violence, child-focused interventions, education, and emergency financial assistance.

**Third**, the sharp **military escalation in northeastern South Sudan** has driven new displacement into Ethiopia, with over 70,000 people arriving in Gambella since 9 March. Gambella already hosts nearly 450,000 refugees. Given the scale and speed of these new arrivals, UNHCR will be declaring an **L2 emergency** to ensure reinforced support and coordination.

Across all three emergencies, UNHCR has deployed staff through internal rosters and standby partners. Since the beginning of 2026, **26 new deployments** have been facilitated while **68 deployments** have continued from 2025, supporting preparedness and first-line response in Burundi, Sudan and the Middle East.

**Emergency preparedness** remains a core priority for UNHCR, with a strong focus on early warning and readiness as the basis for effective and sustainable responses. I would like to thank the **Government of Luxembourg** for supporting our early warning system and the **Government of Japan** for strengthening local preparedness and response capacity through the eCentre for Africa.

**Chair, Excellencies,**

These humanitarian developments unfold against a backdrop of severe and deteriorating **security conditions**. The conflict in Iran and Middle East has sharply elevated risks for UN personnel across the Gulf and wider Middle East. The UN has activated the required personnel and family restrictions, and UNHCR has deployed surge capacity to Lebanon, with preparations underway for Iran, to help maintain operational continuity within acceptable UNSMS risk parameters.

More broadly, the global security environment remains deeply concerning—from heightened tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, to the tragic loss of a UNICEF colleague in eastern DRC following a drone strike, to multiple protracted crises carried over from last year.

These cumulative pressures come at a time when UNHCR's security architecture is strained by reduced funding and staffing. The convergence of **higher operational risk and diminished security capacity** poses serious challenges to our ability to maintain a resilient security posture.

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**Supply chains** are also under stress. The escalation of conflict in the Middle East—particularly in the Gulf—is putting the passage of key air, sea and land corridors at risk, generating a volatile logistics environment and delaying the movement of humanitarian goods. War-risk surcharges and rising insurance premiums have already increased freight and transport costs.

Despite this, UNHCR remains operational. We continue to respond to multiple displacement crises and remain ready for **new, rapid-onset emergencies**, with teams and stocks of core relief items in place—including in Iran and neighbouring operations—prepared to scale up as resources and access permit.

To mitigate supply chain constraints, UNHCR is leveraging preparedness measures and alternative solutions:

- our **global stockpile network** enables rapid deployment when commercial routes are disrupted;
- We are reallocating surplus items from country operations and leveraging global frame agreements when suitable.
- our diverse supplier base allows for rapid shifts in sourcing;
- and we are exploring **alternative air, sea and overland corridors**, supported by close coordination with logistics partners and UN agencies.

Under the **UN80 initiative**, UNHCR and IOM have advanced a joint effort to expand access to eco-friendly, unbranded core relief and shelter items for the wider humanitarian community.

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This includes upgraded shared storage in Douala and Nairobi and replenishment of non-branded items for common use.

UNHCR is also working with partners such as CMA-CGM, UPS, MSC, Flexport and Maersk to secure storage support and **pro-bono transport** to move essential items efficiently, enabling us to redirect supplies from global stockpiles and surplus operations to more underfunded contexts.

Looking ahead, UNHCR, together with Arizona State University, is assessing a multi-year transition to **centrally managed inventories** supported by strategically positioned second-tier warehouses. This will increase efficiency, strengthen preparedness and enhance the impact of donor contributions.

We continue to advance environmental sustainability in our logistics. In 2025, UNHCR reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the procurement of eco-friendly relief items by **14.88%**, with a target of **30% by 2030** – without increasing the costs. For example, in 2025 UNHCR used global frame agreements for four core relief items—blankets, buckets, jerry cans and sleeping mats—with greener specifications, reducing carbon emissions while also lowering unit costs. Overall savings amounted to approximately USD 666,000.

Following the successful solarization of our Termez stockpile, solar installations have been placed in our Douala warehouse, and we are expanding proximity sourcing by partnering with manufacturers closer to major emergency regions.

### **Chair, Excellencies,**

These emergencies represent an extremely challenging operational landscape. Yet UNHCR continues to deliver—strengthening preparedness, reinforcing security measures, adapting supply chains, and partnering across the humanitarian system to ensure effective, principled and accountable responses. We remain grateful for the continued political and financial support that enables us to protect and assist those forced to flee.