



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

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Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

Conflict, violence, and often egregious human rights abuses have sadly become a daily feature in the lives of millions of people around the world. They are trapped in enclaves, besieged under horrendous conditions, or forced to flee from their homes. Many are uprooted from their communities and often their countries, living in situations of prolonged uncertainty and instability. As we have seen on every continent, more and more people are compelled -- by deteriorating security situations and increasingly restricted access to protection -- to move over land or by sea in the hopes that they will find safety further afield. We launched our annual *Global Trends Report* yesterday. Today, more than 59.5 million people are living in situations of displacement. This staggering number is the highest since the Second World War. More than 13.9 million people fled their homes in 2014 alone, and thousands more died trying to reach safety.

The multiplication and increasing interconnectedness of conflicts in recent years have presented humanitarian actors with formidable challenges. As root causes of these conflicts so often remain unaddressed, and political solutions remain out of reach, much of the focus has been on emergency responses, in which the burden of action falls upon humanitarian actors. In the second half of 2014, humanitarian organisations were responding to four system-wide emergencies simultaneously: in the Central African Republic, Iraq, South Sudan, and Syria. By the end of the year, these four situations alone -- including the refugee situations they engendered in the neighbouring countries -- accounted for nearly 40 per cent of UNHCR's human and financial resources. But this is only the tip of the iceberg, as we are also contending with long-standing situations and newly emerging ones, such as of late larger movements of migrants and refugees by sea.

The humanitarian system is under enormous strain; most notably its financing is not commensurate with the ever-growing humanitarian needs. While more demands are placed upon the humanitarian community, there are also more criticisms when expectations are not met. Constructive feedback is crucial, and we endeavour to address the gaps. Yet it is also true that humanitarian action is a known and operational option which is easy to turn to as the only response to unresolved conflict and political impasse. Emergency response and life-saving measures, however, cannot replace the action required to address the root causes of conflict and seemingly endless cycles of violence. This year's High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection in December will therefore focus on this theme.

Against this background, we must be creative in our work and how we work together, notably in the area of protection where joined-up efforts on advocacy, for instance, can achieve a real impact. This requires us to develop a strong and coherent humanitarian response built upon the diversity of perspectives and expertise of the different actors to ensure our complementarity and effective coordination.

By way of example, we must think more about how linking development programming and humanitarian responses can help to address the legal, economic, and social factors that fuel conflict or compel people to flee their countries or move onward to new host countries. UNHCR advocates for a simultaneous approach to dealing with both emergencies and development, and believes that development is not sustainable unless all -- including displaced people -- are included. Development responses need to take into account the particular burden that host countries and their communities and infrastructures shoulder when faced with large-scale displacement.

In addition, partnerships with other organisations are an essential and central pillar of our collective response, and UNHCR continues to nurture and expand our collaboration with other UN organisations, NGOs, and key partners, including development actors. For example, over 200 organisations participated in the 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan [3RP] for Syrian refugees across five countries, coordinated together with UNDP. UNHCR also worked closely with the World Food Programme on a major media campaign for continued food security and nutrition needs in refugee operations in Africa.

It is also critical that our efforts begin with the affected communities themselves, in recognition of the resilience, strengths, and coping mechanisms that displaced persons and affected communities draw upon in securing their own protection. We must ensure an inclusive approach that is sensitive to age, gender, and diversity considerations. We have advocated for a community-based approach that not only builds upon existing capacities, but also facilitates possibilities for reconciliation, reconstruction, and peacebuilding. I have already seen the fruits of this approach in several operations in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Yemen, where multi-ethnic community centres coordinate protection and assistance activities, for example in relation to SGBV and child protection, involving host and displaced communities alike. This encourages coexistence and a shared sense of responsibility based upon mutual concerns, needs, and experiences across national, ethnic, or religious lines.

UNHCR remains fully committed to playing its part in the overall UN humanitarian response in line with the Transformative Agenda. It also complements, and contributes to, the humanitarian system through the exercise of its specific responsibilities for refugees and stateless persons. These responsibilities are enshrined in international law, built on decades of experience, and underpinned by a deep sense of accountability. They encompass the whole life-cycle of displacement, ranging from the emergency, life-saving phase to finding solutions. It is necessary that we recognise and respond to refugees' specific situations and needs as non-nationals. As such, the refugee response is an integral yet distinct part of the humanitarian response.

While living up to the legal obligations we have towards refugees, it is equally important to ensure the centrality of protection for all persons in need of humanitarian assistance. Last year's *Joint OCHA/UNHCR Note on Mixed Situations* was an important step in clarifying our respective roles and accountabilities in such contexts. We are pleased to note its application in the field, in particular in places such as Cameroon and Iraq. As we move forward, we remain committed to deepening our engagement, partnership, and cooperation with all humanitarian actors.

We, in UNHCR, look forward to the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit, and support the call of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to re-inspire and reinvigorate the world around the humanitarian endeavour. Ensuring the centrality of protection in humanitarian responses and accountability towards affected populations will be key to forging a vision for the future. Humanitarian values are part of our common heritage. They are severely tested as we speak, but we can do justice to them when we honour them as a common trust.