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High Commissioner's Programme**

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**Strategic partnerships and coordination
(including United Nations reform)**

Summary

This paper reviews key developments in strategic partnerships and coordination since the last report to the seventy-first meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2018. It provides examples of the different types of partnerships UNHCR is pursuing and describes how institutional changes, including broader United Nations reform efforts, are strengthening UNHCR's strategic partnership approach. It also highlights the importance of partnerships in implementing the Global Compact on Refugees and discusses UNHCR's ongoing engagement in various inter-agency processes.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I.	Introduction	1-2	3
II.	Strategic partnerships	3-23	3
	A. United Nations system and international organizations.....	4-10	3
	B. Non-governmental organizations	11-14	5
	C. Financial institutions	15-17	5
	D. The private sector	18-20	6
	E. Sports organizations	21-23	6
III.	Coordination	24-37	7
	A. Refugee response.....	24-28	7
	B. Internal displacement.....	29-23	7
	C. Cooperation in the context of mixed movements	34-37	9

I. Introduction

1. In line with the High Commissioner’s strategic directions (2017-2021) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which was affirmed by the General Assembly in December 2018, UNHCR remains committed to deepening and broadening its strategic partnerships. The rich experience obtained to date from the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) has helped inform UNHCR’s partnership priorities moving forward to support the implementation of the GCR.

2. UNHCR’s work in the area of partnerships has also been guided by a number of system-wide reforms and initiatives. This includes the reform of the United Nations development system and the ongoing work on the sustainable development goals (SDGs). SDG17, in particular, emphasizes the importance of strengthened partnerships and cooperation to achieve the SDGs. UNHCR has played a catalytic role in this regard, supporting national governments, including line ministries, and bringing together development actors in support of the response to displacement and situations of statelessness. In order to strengthen this role and position UNHCR to achieve greater impact, a number of internal changes were implemented in 2018. This included the creation of a new Division for Resilience and Solutions and the restructuring of the Partnership and Coordination Service. The service now comprises the sections which manage inter-agency coordination, partnerships with United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, as well as sports initiatives, ensuring coherence in the Office’s engagement. Moreover, the High Commissioner’s decentralization and regionalization initiative, reflecting broader United Nations reform efforts, is expected to further advance UNHCR’s strategic partnerships at the point of delivery.

II. Strategic partnerships

3. The engagement of a broad range of actors, including those beyond the traditional humanitarian sphere, is critical to mobilizing effective responses and pursuing solutions to forced displacement and statelessness. This means strengthening existing partnerships, but also pursuing new ones that can help foster innovative approaches to protection and assistance. Practicing “new ways of working” such as strengthened humanitarian-development cooperation, is key and fundamental to the broader United Nations reform efforts, particularly in relation to the reform of the United Nations development system. UNHCR has notably contributed to field-driven initiatives to identify and work towards collective outcomes. This allows UNHCR and its partners to capitalize on comparative advantages and mandates, transcending longstanding silos, with a positive impact on operations. A key objective for UNHCR is to ensure that protection remains central to these efforts.

A. United Nations system and international organizations

United Nations development reform

4. UNHCR is actively supporting the reform of the United Nations development system, which aims to ensure more effective and efficient delivery of development activities at the country level as well as coordinated action and engagement with a broad array of development actors to meet national development priorities and ensure that “no one is left behind”. This is consistent with the ambitions of the GCR and will increase opportunities for UNHCR to cooperate with development actors in the pursuit of protection and solutions for refugees and support for the communities that host them.

5. Many aspects of the reform, including enhancing regional platforms, mirror UNHCR’s strategic priorities and internal change efforts, which aim to place decision-making and accountability closer to the point of delivery. As a member of the United Nations SDG Core Group, and further to UNHCR’s commitment to ensuring the success of the reform of the United Nations development system, UNHCR participates in various strands of

work. It serves as Co-Chair of the Business Innovation Group, together with the World Food Programme (WFP). In this role, UNHCR and WFP are responsible for leading efforts to consolidate “back office functions” into common services, both locally and globally, with the aim of improving support to operations and directing more resources to core programming and delivery. UNHCR is also engaged in the design of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the articulation of the Management Accountability Framework and the revision of the Resident Coordinator selection process. With respect to the latter, the Office has doubled its contribution to the Resident Coordinator system, from \$1.24 million in 2018, to \$2.5 million in 2019.

Coordination within the United Nations and with other international organizations

6. Committed to the central reform agenda and efforts to strengthen the organization as a whole, UNHCR remains a reliable partner in inter-agency fora, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as well as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). UNHCR played a key role in developing the IASC “humanitarian system-wide scale-up” protocols, which replace the 2012 IASC “humanitarian system-wide emergency activation (L3 response)”. This guidance aims to strengthen the response to sudden-onset crises where the humanitarian community’s capacity to lead, coordinate and deliver assistance and protection does not match the scale, complexity and urgency of the situation.

7. Cooperation with UNHCR’s key partners in the United Nations system, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), continued to be strengthened both at the central and field levels. Several joint tools were developed, including in relation to inter-agency needs assessments. A key focus was also the partnership with WFP, which resulted in joint principles for targeting assistance and a global data sharing agreement. In December 2018, UNHCR, WFP, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and OCHA agreed on key principles for a common cash platform, which can include other interested agencies, in line with the “grand bargain commitments”. In follow up to the GCR and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the High Commissioner and the Director General of IOM issued a joint letter in January 2019, outlining the distinct roles and responsibilities of both organizations and areas for collaboration in situations involving both refugees and migrants.

8. Based on the findings of a joint review of cooperation between UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the two organizations developed a plan of action to strengthen collaboration in several areas, including joint programming and fundraising. Collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is also producing results, with staff secondments between the two organizations and the joint launch of the first ever survey of refugee financing in September 2018.

9. Efforts to strengthen and ensure predictability in responding to new crises through the updating of existing cooperation agreements are underway with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

10. UNHCR furthered protection and solutions objectives through continued engagement in the United Nations human rights mechanisms. In 2018, UNHCR contributed over 160 country-specific reports to the human rights mechanisms. Some 73 per cent of UNHCR’s recommendations to United Nations treaty monitoring bodies were reflected in their concluding observations to States, based on which UNHCR was able to advocate important changes in national legislation and practices. It also closely collaborated with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In follow up to the annual high-level meeting between UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the two organizations enhanced their cooperation on internal displacement, notably by working more closely to support States in the development and implementation of relevant laws and policies. A joint UNHCR-ICRC aide-memoire on the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and IDP camps and settlements was issued in July 2018.

B. Non-governmental organizations

11. UNHCR's work with NGO partners, which play a critical role in providing humanitarian assistance and reaching populations of concern, was enhanced through various initiatives. NGOs participated in discussions on the development of the GCR and provided written contributions. The annual NGO consultations brought together over 500 participants, who provided valuable inputs to the GCR and other policy discussions.

12. In 2018, UNHCR disbursed approximately \$1.24 billion to 860 national and international NGOs.¹ UNHCR is committed to reaching its "grand bargain" target to provide 25 per cent of its programme expenditures to local and national responders by 2020. In 2018, UNHCR reached 22 per cent (up from 19 per cent when the grand bargain was introduced). Some \$752 million was provided to 865 local and national partners (up from \$699 million in 2017), including \$555 million to 666 NGOs (up from \$524 million in 2017). This is the highest number of local and national partners recorded by UNHCR.

13. UNHCR issued a guidance note developed with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) on "complementary capacity strengthening" for NGO partners, which ultimately aims to bring more effective support to refugees and other persons of concern. The Office also continued to strengthen collaboration with its NGO partners in the areas of advocacy, capacity-building, joint planning, enhanced use of resources, operational delivery and the prevention of fraud and corruption (through the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners. Local NGO partners are also participating in a number of initiatives, undertaken jointly with UNICEF and WFP, aimed at harmonizing and simplifying processes. This includes harmonized reporting formats, which have been rolled out to all country operations.

14. UNHCR's Partner Portal was converted into an inter-agency Partner Portal in November 2018, which has helped expand interaction between partners and provided an opportunity for them to participate in broader United Nations activities. It supports common due diligence processes that reduce the administrative burden on partners and enhance efficiency. Since the conversion took place, an additional 26 new partners entered into partnership agreements with UNHCR. The Office and UNICEF have also harmonized their auditing method for common partners, using a risk-based approach established by UNHCR.

C. Financial institutions

15. UNHCR and the World Bank have advanced their cooperation to address the challenges of forced displacement. To date, 14 countries have been determined eligible for the World Bank's funding under the International Development Association (IDA) refugee and host community sub-window initiated in December 2016.² UNHCR also engaged with the World Bank within the framework of the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCF), which mobilized \$500 million in grant funding from donors that leveraged approximately \$2.5 billion in concessional financing. These resources supported projects in Jordan and Lebanon aimed at building social and economic resilience within the refugee and local populations.

16. Building on a series of joint analytical studies in Africa and the Middle East, the World Bank and UNHCR are establishing a Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement (JDC) to be located in Copenhagen. The JDC will focus on improving the generation and analysis of household-level socioeconomic data on refugees, IDPs and stateless populations to enhance

¹ These figures are provisional, as the closure of the 2018 accounts is still in progress.

² These 14 countries are: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda and Uganda. Kenya is also under consideration. Approved projects within these countries relate to, among other sectors, agriculture, education, health, nutrition, governance, rural development, social protection and labour. During 2018, UNHCR participated in several joint eligibility missions informing the World Bank's assessment of the protection environment and refugee vulnerabilities in the countries concerned.

the ability of stakeholders to make timely and evidence-based programming decisions. In April 2018, the World Bank Group established the Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) coordination platform for addressing forced displacement and migration. UNHCR participated in the inaugural meetings of this platform. It aims to raise awareness and encourage the engagement of multilateral development banks in refugee and displacement situations.

17. Collaboration with the World Bank Group was further broadened through an initiative with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) conducted in Kenya, “Kakuma as a marketplace”. Through a detailed assessment of the volume and type of trade and business carried out in Kakuma refugee camp, IFC aims to mobilize investments from local entrepreneurs to enhance economic opportunities. IFC is considering similar studies in Ethiopia and Uganda.

D. The private sector

18. In 2018, a new, multi-year strategy was drafted for private partnerships and philanthropy, which is aligned with UNHCR’s objective of raising \$1 billion from the private sector by 2025. The strategy will ensure that UNHCR is prepared to leverage and cater for private sector engagement, including in the context of the GCR, with equal attention given to the financial and non-financial impact arising from these partnerships.

19. The Office has launched a new “2 billion kilometres to safety” campaign, which aims to raise awareness of the long journeys refugees undertake each year to reach safety and to raise \$15 million for UNHCR’s operations from individuals and other private sector donors. The campaign invites the public to run, walk or cycle the cumulative total of 2 billion kilometres, which refugees are estimated to collectively travel each year.

20. UNHCR is engaged with the World Economic Forum (WEF), primarily in the areas of digitalization and innovative financing. In 2018, the High Commissioner participated in the WEF’s Global Futures Council on the Humanitarian System, which aims to define the roles of humanitarian organizations and other actors as accelerators of local capacity. He also became a member of the WEF High-Level Group on Humanitarian Investing. In January 2019, UNHCR participated in the WEF annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, which provided an opportunity to engage in numerous private sector meetings and side events where refugee and displacement issues were discussed. A number of existing partnerships were strengthened and potential ones promoted through bilateral meetings, while UNHCR organized a breakfast event on investing in refugee inclusion involving the International Finance Corporation and some 20 high-level private sector participants to discuss opportunities for working together in refugee host areas.

E. Sports organizations

21. In line with paragraph 44 of the GCR,³ UNHCR is strengthening existing partnerships and developing new ones with sports-focused organizations and entities. Partnerships with the International Olympic Committee, Football Club Barcelona Foundation, Asian Football Confederation, Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation and Football Club Social Alliance, among others, are already providing resources and expertise in sports programming.

22. UNHCR recognizes the potential of sports activities to enhance the protection environment for refugee, IDP and stateless children and youth and their communities. In 2018, UNHCR, the International Olympic Committee and Terre des Hommes launched a

³ Paragraph 44 of the GCR recognizes “the important role that sports [...] can play in social development, inclusion, cohesion, and well-being, particularly for refugee children (both boys and girls), adolescents and youth, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities”, and calls for the pursuance of new partnerships to “increase access to sporting [...] activities in refugee-hosting areas”.

“Sports for Protection toolkit”, which serves as a practical guide for sports programming in forced displacement settings.

23. In 2017, UNHCR strengthened its long-standing partnership with the International Olympic Committee through the establishment of the Olympic Refugee Foundation. With support from Olympic Movement partners, governments and private donations, the foundation aims to create safe spaces for sport in displacement settings and funds multi-year “sport for protection” activities. In 2018, such activities were carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, Kenya and Turkey. UNHCR is also engaged with partners in the United Nations system and other international organizations through a new network of sport focal points based in Geneva and Lausanne, which aims to strengthen cooperation in the area of sport for development and peace.

III. Coordination

A. Refugee response

24. UNHCR continued to strengthen coordination in refugee situations and explore ways to engage development actors from the outset of any response. With this objective in mind, high-level bilateral meetings were organized in 2018 with key partners in the United Nations, including WFP, IOM, OCHA, and UNICEF; international organizations such as the IFRC, and with numerous NGO partners including the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Plan International, as well as others under the umbrella of ICVA and InterAction. In June 2018, a strategic meeting between a select group of Resident Coordinators and UNHCR Representatives was held in Geneva to discuss collaboration and complementarities in the context of comprehensive refugee responses.

25. Consistent with the refugee coordination model, UNHCR worked on joint regional planning and analysis, and on national protection and solutions strategies developed under the leadership of the Regional Refugee Coordinators. In 2018, regional refugee response plans were coordinated for the situations related to the conflicts in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and South Sudan. In December 2018, the 2019 regional refugee and migrant response plan for the Venezuela situation, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, was released.

26. The Syria regional refugee and resilience plan (3RP), co-led by UNHCR and UNDP, has set an example for addressing the needs of refugees and host countries and communities within a single multi-agency regional plan. Building on this experience and the advantages of mid- to long-term planning established by the 3RP for the Syria situation, all 2019 refugee response plans cover two-year periods (2019-2020) and integrate emergency response efforts with endeavours to build the resilience of refugees and host communities.

27. Taking into account the different types of refugee response plans, in 2018, over 220 partners in more than 20 countries appealed for some \$8 billion under the leadership of the respective Regional Refugee Coordinators. More than \$4 billion was mobilized for the response to these crises in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, of which \$2.9 billion was pledged directly to partner agencies by donors.

28. UNHCR participated in 19 out of a total of 21 humanitarian response plans (HRPs), of which 11 had refugee chapters. UNHCR also participated in the development of 99 UNDAFs in 2018.

B. Internal displacement

29. Throughout 2018, UNHCR worked with OCHA and IASC partners to develop more coherent approaches with an orientation towards solutions for IDP situations. Internally,

following an operational review, UNHCR is updating its policy on internal displacement in line with the High Commissioner's commitment for UNHCR to become a more decisive and predictable partner in IDP settings. One key recommendation of the review was to strengthen early preparedness.⁴ Moreover, the review underlined the importance for UNHCR to be more predictable in its early engagement in new/evolving situations.⁵ Other recommendations are also being implemented, including ways to underpin protection as a driver for response.

30. In 2018, the 20th anniversary year of the "Guiding principles on internal displacement", a three-year multi-stakeholder plan of action for IDPs was launched. Entitled "GP20 plan of action", it calls for more strategic collaboration between humanitarian and development actors to prevent and resolve internal displacement as well as to enhance protection for IDPs. UNHCR is fully engaged in the implementation of the GP20 plan of action, through its country-level activities and regional exchanges (including in Africa where the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) will be marked in 2019). UNHCR's co-leadership of a Steering Group comprised of United Nations partners, international organizations, States and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs will also support this initiative.

31. UNHCR continues to lead the global protection cluster (GPC) and co-lead the global shelter cluster and the global camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster. UNHCR leads 24 out of 26 field protection clusters and cluster-like mechanisms. In 2018, the GPC marked GP20 by convening round-table discussions with government and NGO partners in Kiev and Amman. In October 2018, the GPC also held a stocktaking exercise with Resident Coordinators, United Nations agencies and the ICRC on implementation of the IASC protection policy. In 2018, 17 field missions in support of 12 countries and 3 regions were undertaken by the GPC, including to help develop Humanitarian Country Team protection strategies (70 per cent of the Humanitarian Country Teams now have such a strategy). In May 2018, and for the first time, the GPC brought together representatives from its "areas of responsibility"⁶ at a conference in Bangkok aimed at promoting greater coherence across a wide range of protection activities.

32. In the context of the global shelter cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IFRC, UNHCR leads (or co-leads) 13 of the 28 active country-level shelter clusters and cluster-like structures, responding to the needs of more than 7 million persons of concern through the coordinated efforts of some 350 partners and a combined budget of \$300 million. Ten of the 45 partners in the global shelter cluster work closely with the cluster lead agencies in the strategic advisory group, which developed a new ambitious strategy for the cluster for 2018-2022. In 2018, more than 1,500 days of coordination, technical and information management support were provided to field clusters, of which 300 days were field missions. In 2018, collaboration between UNHCR and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), formalized through a global memorandum of understanding, increased on issues related to shelter, settlement and urban planning. The two organizations also agreed to work together in providing support to operations through the deployment of joint teams and the development of urban guidelines.

33. The global CCCM cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, supported 19 country-level clusters and cluster-like structures in 2018, with UNHCR leading (or co-leading) 14 of them and providing 290 days of field missions.⁷ Collaboration with NORCAP (standby roster operated by NRC) on capacity-building and mentoring for the CCCM cluster has led to the provision of training for UNHCR and partner staff, as well as for the authorities in Ethiopia

⁴ As a result, minimum preparedness actions for all countries will be established, including through the deployment of coordinators and information management specialists.

⁵ Displacement in the Kasais/Ituri of the Democratic Republic of the Congo coincided with the IDP review. UNHCR rapidly stepped up its engagement in this new situation.

⁶ The GPC areas of responsibility include: child protection, gender-based violence, mine action, and housing, land and property.

⁷ Alternative cluster-like CCCM coordination structures established to fit the operational contexts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Niger will be evaluated for their efficiency and delivery impact.

and Sudan. The annual CCCM cluster retreat reaffirmed the objectives of the 2017-2021 strategy and confirmed the relevance of site management approaches and tools in non-camp settings. The strategic advisory group of the global CCCM cluster was renewed with ACTED, the DRC and the NRC, while the Lutheran World Federation discontinued its participation.

C. Cooperation in the context of mixed movements

34. In 2018, UNHCR continued to work with a wide range of partners to ensure effective operational responses to mixed movements involving refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. In the context of the Joint African Union-European Union-United Nations Taskforce, UNHCR and IOM have worked closely in the Mediterranean region, with IOM carrying out assisted returns, reintegration and community-based support for migrants, and UNHCR supporting the evacuation of asylum-seekers and refugees for resettlement processing and other solutions. UNHCR and IOM have also proposed a concrete, practical and predictable regional disembarkation arrangement for the Mediterranean, which would complement the ongoing reform of the Common European Asylum System.

35. In response to the outflow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, UNHCR and IOM established a regional inter-agency coordination platform and appointed a Joint Special Representative, who is working with governments and partners to build regional alliances and foster support for affected countries. A regional strategy to support host countries has been developed, underpinned by a protection strategy and taking into account the enabling protection environment and access to education, health and livelihoods provided by most of the host States in the region. UNHCR also cooperates with civil society organizations working in the field of mixed movements, including in connection with issues such as detention, children on the move and combatting trafficking in persons, and has continued to engage in mixed movement coordination arrangements in a range of operations, such as in the Horn of Africa

36. Responses to the mixed character of some large population movements, including to address the challenges they pose for States, will be guided by both the GCR and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). The GCR foresees the possibility of burden- and responsibility-sharing arrangements in support of States affected by large mixed movements, as appropriate. UNHCR will work with partners such as IOM to consider further what support can be jointly provided to States in this context, building on existing operational partnerships and arrangements.

37. In addition, as a member of the Executive Committee of the newly formed United Nations Network on Migration, UNHCR is working with partners to ensure that coherent system-wide support is provided to States to assist them in implementing the GCM and in addressing migration challenges, including gaps in protection and assistance for migrants, as a complement to responses for refugees and others in need of international protection.