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### **Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions**

## **Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/150](#) on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. It updates information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-third session ([A/73/340](#)) and covers the period from 1 July 2018 through 30 June 2019. The report has been coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and includes information provided by the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. It also includes information drawn from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

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\* [A/74/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. Africa<sup>1</sup> continued to host increasing numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons and others affected by conflict, persecution and violence, with the humanitarian landscape characterized by both new emergencies and protracted situations. By the end of 2018, the number of persons of concern<sup>2</sup> in Africa reached 26.4 million, up from 24.2 million in 2017. This included 6.3 million refugees (approximately the same number as in 2017) and 17.7 million internally displaced persons (up from 14.5 million). The region also hosted 484,000 asylum seekers and some 712,000 stateless persons.

2. The majority of the refugees came from South Sudan (2.3 million), Somalia (950,000), the Sudan (725,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (720,000), the Central African Republic (591,000), Eritrea (507,000) and Burundi (344,000). The displacement crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained one of the world's most complex, with armed violence and inter-ethnic conflict continuing to displace large numbers of people. The countries of the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel continued to be affected by both internal and cross-border displacement owing to violence and insecurity.

3. Forced displacement was driven and compounded by an array of factors, including conflict and violence, environmental degradation, human trafficking, forced recruitment, sexual and gender-based violence, erratic weather, floods and drought. Instances of refolement were reported in some countries. Food insecurity and severe malnutrition remained a serious concern.

4. Although they face severe challenges of their own, many countries kept their borders open to those in need of international protection. Uganda remained the largest African host country, providing protection and assistance to 1.17 million refugees, followed by the Sudan with 1.08 million refugees. There were 655,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Ethiopia.

5. While some 583,600 internally displaced persons and 341,000 refugees were able to return home in 2018, the identification of other solutions remained a challenge, with fewer resettlement places and limited opportunities for local integration through naturalization. Several countries continued to pursue comprehensive solutions, with new initiatives and policy changes taking place in the context of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the global compact on refugees, which was affirmed by the General Assembly in December 2018 in its resolution [73/151](#). In December 2019, the Global Refugee Forum will provide the opportunity to assess progress in implementing the compact and allow States and others to announce pledges and contributions towards achieving its objectives.

6. Several countries hosting protracted refugee populations are gaining access to development resources, which enable a focus on socioeconomic inclusion that benefits both refugees and host communities. Since 2016, eight African countries have piloted the comprehensive refugee response framework, and progress has been made with new laws and policies fostering the inclusion of refugees in national education, health care and other services.

7. In 2019, the African Union commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and

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<sup>1</sup> In the present report, Africa refers to sub-Saharan Africa only.

<sup>2</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees uses the term "persons of concern" to include refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, stateless persons and others in a refugee-like situation. The figure in paragraph 1 includes returnees who repatriated in 2018 and were still receiving assistance.

the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). It declared 2019 as the year of “refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons” and convened a series of consultative meetings focusing on root causes, durable solutions and capacity development, as well as the humanitarian-development nexus. That declaration and its supporting activities showcased best practices and good examples in African countries hosting displaced people in the light of the OAU Convention and the global compact on refugees.

## II. Subregional overviews

### A. Central Africa and the Great Lakes

8. In the Central Africa and Great Lakes region, the number of refugees remained relatively stable, at 1.4 million, while the number of internally displaced persons rose from 5.4 million to nearly 6 million.

9. Although a peace agreement was signed by the Government of the Central African Republic and armed groups, and some returns have taken place, the situation in the country continued to be volatile. Security incidents, including in parts of the country that were previously unaffected, contributed to new displacement into neighbouring countries, mostly Cameroon, but also Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Some 45,000 people fled across borders in 2018 alone, bringing the total number of refugees from the Central African Republic to 590,900, while the number of internally displaced persons rose to more than 656,000, with some 266,400 newly internally displaced.

10. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to be a theatre of armed conflict, with the number of internally displaced persons reaching 4.5 million, while the number of Congolese refugees in the region rose to 850,000 by May 2019, the majority in Uganda (more than 303,000). In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo hosts nearly 550,000 refugees. Those affected by this complex and widespread crisis remain exposed to human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, chronic malnutrition and disease. The outbreak of the Ebola virus disease represented an additional cause of concern. Meanwhile, food insecurity, often exacerbated by displacement, affected an estimated 13.1 million people in the country.

11. The situation in Burundi also remained complex, with significant human rights concerns and unresolved political tensions leading to continued population movements. Countries in the region continued to provide crucial protection. As of June 2019, some 113,000 people were internally displaced and there were more than 344,000 Burundian refugees in the subregion, mainly in the United Republic of Tanzania. Limited voluntary returns have taken place in 2018 and 2019.

12. Insecurity in the south-western and north-western regions of Cameroon resulted in internal displacement and refugees seeking international protection in Nigeria. Their numbers grew to more than 35,800 by April 2019, while the population of internally displaced persons in those regions was estimated to be 437,000.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Government estimates place the number of internally displaced persons in the south-western and north-western regions at 152,000.

## **B. East Africa and the Horn of Africa**

13. Notwithstanding some promising political developments, displacement continued throughout the subregion, driven mainly by ongoing insecurity in Somalia and South Sudan. The number of internally displaced persons rose to 9.2 million and the number of refugees and asylum seekers to 4.6 million. Uganda hosted the largest number of refugees in the subregion (1.17 million), of whom two thirds were South Sudanese and more than one quarter were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The refugee population in the Sudan increased by some 19 per cent, to a little more than 1 million people.

14. Somalia remained one of the most protracted displacement situations globally, with more than 2.6 million internally displaced persons (an increase of 25 per cent, compared with 2017) and 949,700 refugees outside the country, of whom 80 per cent remained in the subregion. The number of Somali refugees decreased by 36,700 owing to a verification exercise and returns from Kenya and Yemen, making Ethiopia the second-largest host country of Somali refugees (176,000), following Kenya (252,500). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is working with the Government of Kenya on finding solutions for the 200,000 refugees in the Dadaab refugee camps, some of whom have now lived there for 28 years.

15. In Ethiopia, political changes were accompanied by a rise in intercommunal conflict. More than 1 million people were internally displaced, although many have since returned, mainly in the border zones. The displacement came on the heels of a crippling drought that had lasted more than one year. At the regional level, the peace declaration made by the President of Eritrea and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia raised the prospects of greater stability in the region.

16. In the Sudan, the provision of protection and assistance to displaced people and refugees was rendered extremely challenging amid political instability, insecurity, human rights abuses and a deepening economic crisis. The risk of a re-emergence of conflict in Darfur and elsewhere was of concern. Major funding gaps meant that some 1.8 million internally displaced persons, mostly in Northern Darfur, Western Darfur, Southern Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, and 1.1 million refugees dispersed throughout the country received insufficient humanitarian assistance. Basic services such as education and health, as well as livelihoods and food security, were seriously affected by the deteriorating political situation, leading to a further increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian aid.

17. The revitalized South Sudan peace agreement reached in September 2018 rekindled hope that one of the worst displacement crises in the region could be resolved. While there was a relative reduction in fighting in parts of the country, the situation remained precarious and the peace deal fragile. Nearly 2 million people remained internally displaced, while there were 2.2 million refugees in the six neighbouring countries.

## **C. Southern Africa**

18. The southern Africa subregion hosted 274,800 asylum seekers and 211,000 refugees, mainly from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia. There was an increase of more than 8 per cent in the population of concern in the subregion, compared with 2017, owing mostly to population movements from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to neighbouring Angola, Zambia and the subregion. By the end of 2018, the southern Africa subregion was hosting more than 180,000 Congolese refugees and asylum seekers.

19. In March and April 2019, tropical cyclones Idai and Kenneth struck the region, resulting in more than 600 deaths and affecting 3 million people in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In some areas, such as Tongogara, Zimbabwe, refugees and host communities were severely affected, including refugees who had escaped conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

20. Xenophobia remained a major concern, in particular in South Africa, which currently hosts some 273,500 refugees and asylum seekers. Although refugees and asylum seekers have the right to work and study in South Africa, they have been targeted by anti-foreigner protests and were subject to a number of attacks during the reporting period (1 July 2018–30 June 2019). UNHCR supported the Government of South Africa in assisting those who were affected by the violence and re-engaging in a sustained public education campaign.

#### **D. West Africa**

21. In 2018, the western Africa subregion experienced interconnected armed conflicts and violent extremism, with far-reaching effects. As a result, the population of internally displaced persons grew from 1.9 million to nearly 2.5 million, while the number of refugees increased from 286,900 to 326,300. Meanwhile, competition over resources further fuelled intercommunal tensions in parts of the region. In addition, there were close to 700,000 stateless people or people at risk of statelessness.

22. The Lake Chad Basin area continued to face a complex humanitarian and protection crisis. Some 232,000 Nigerian refugees were living either in camps or with host communities in the Niger (119,000), Cameroon (102,000) and Chad (11,000), while almost 2 million people remained internally displaced inside Nigeria. The continuing insurgency led to a spreading of the conflict across borders and further displacement.

23. Significant levels of new displacement were caused by an escalation of violence in the Sahel region, in particular in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger. In Burkina Faso and Mali, violent attacks by militant extremists rekindled long-standing tensions between communities. An attack on the villages of Ogossagou and Welingara in central Mali in March 2019, killing some 160 Fulani villagers, illustrated the worrying pattern of reprisal attacks fuelled by a combination of terrorism and ethnic hostility. As a result, there were some 120,000 internally displaced persons in Mali and 138,000 Malian refugees in the region. In Burkina Faso, the number of internally displaced persons quadrupled since June 2018, reaching a total of 170,400 people, owing to armed attacks and insecurity in the East, Centre-Nord, Nord and Sahel regions. More than 12,000 people from Burkina Faso looked for safety in neighbouring countries, including Ghana, Mali and the Niger.

### **III. Protection**

#### **A. Refugees and asylum seekers**

24. Most host countries in sub-Saharan Africa continued to welcome refugees and asylum seekers, maintaining an open-door policy. In various parts of the continent, however, refugee protection standards were not fully upheld, with instances of refoulement and physical and administrative obstacles preventing refugees from gaining access to protection and assistance.

25. In December 2018, South Sudan acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Notwithstanding the challenges of internal

conflict and displacement, the country remained committed to protecting the refugees and asylum seekers on its territory, who numbered some 300,000 in December 2018.

26. Progress was made in developing national asylum systems. Support was provided to several countries in managing increased numbers of arrivals and asylum applications, implementing group-based approaches and adapting to situations involving mixed movements of refugees and migrants. Malawi, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia benefited from specific support.

27. Registration remained an important protection tool for refugees in Africa, including to ensure access to rights, promote their inclusion in national systems, economies and services, and contribute to the prevention of statelessness. UNHCR and partners continued to work with host Governments to improve their registration systems and data management, in line with data protection standards, with the aim of facilitating access to protection and assistance and enabling the early identification of individuals with specific needs. A key priority in 2018 was improving the collection and use of data on people with disabilities to inform inclusive planning and to better monitor how they gained access to services and assistance. The UNHCR biometric identity management system was widely used in Africa and a new tool allowed for offline registration in areas with limited connectivity.

28. Progress was made with respect to the inclusion of refugees in national systems. The revised refugee law in Ethiopia, which came into force in April 2019 and is one of the most progressive globally, granted refugees access to work permits, education and financial services, and allowed them to register vital events, such as births. Guinea also adopted a new refugee law that enhanced refugee access to education, employment and durable solutions.

## **B. Mixed movements**

29. With numerous conflicts affecting the continent, refugees and asylum seekers continued to undertake dangerous journeys from sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and across the central and western Mediterranean Sea to Europe, as well as towards South Africa. Travelling the same routes as migrants but for very different reasons, which are often controlled by human traffickers and smugglers, they suffered serious human rights violations, including beatings and torture, extortion, detention, forced labour and sexual violence.

30. Cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union was intended to save and protect lives along dangerous routes, to support voluntary returns to countries of origin and to resettle those in need of international protection. In Libya, UNHCR supported the evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers to find durable solutions elsewhere, while the International Organization for Migration carried out assisted returns, reintegration and community-based support for migrants there and elsewhere on the continent.

31. The emergency transit mechanism in the Niger, established by UNHCR in 2017 with support from the European Union, continued to provide a lifeline to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers evacuated out of Libya. To date, nearly 3,900 people, many from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan, have been evacuated, mostly to the Niger. Of them, 1,600 departed from the Niger for resettlement in third countries.

## **C. Internally displaced persons**

32. Africa remained the only region to have concluded a binding instrument to address internal displacement. The Kampala Convention provides a solid framework

for member States to protect internally displaced persons and seek solutions to internal displacement. By June 2019, 28 of the 55 African Union member States had ratified the treaty and 40 had signed it. South Sudan acceded to the Convention in June 2019, and a final draft bill on protection and assistance for internally displaced persons is currently under review by its Transitional National Legislative Assembly. The Niger enacted comprehensive national legislation on internal displacement.

33. The tenth anniversary of the Kampala Convention, in 2019, provided an opportunity to promote progress in preventing, responding to and resolving internal displacement in Africa, in collaboration with the African Union, the African human rights system and other regional bodies. Several States took measures to enhance the rights of internally displaced persons, including the Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan.

34. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, in 2018, a three-year plan of action was launched to strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement towards reducing and resolving internal displacement. This plan promotes the protection of and solutions for internally displaced persons, including with cooperation from national and regional actors such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

#### **D. Prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence**

35. Displacement continued to expose refugees and internally displaced persons, especially women and girls, to a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. In some countries, it was systematically used as a tactic of war, and impunity prevailed. Displaced people in and refugees from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan were known to have been particularly affected. In 2018, more than 1,500 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported to UNHCR and partner agencies in South Sudan alone.

36. United Nations agencies and partners made progress in delivering comprehensive prevention, risk mitigation and response programming in many of the refugee and internal displacement operations in sub-Saharan Africa, using a community-based and multisectoral approach. That approach enabled better access to medical, psychosocial and legal services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) provided psychosocial services to more than 8,000 individuals in Uganda through its local partner, which led to a significant improvement in mental well-being. In total, some 17,300 women and 6,300 men (of whom 70 per cent were refugees) had access to critical psychosocial and legal aid services. In Cameroon, UN-Women helped to increase awareness of sexual and gender-based violence prevention among 17,000 internally displaced persons.

37. Under the “Safe from the Start” initiative, UNHCR deployed protection staff to emergencies in Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Nigeria, the Sudan and Uganda to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence and mitigate the risks. Since the initiative was launched in 2014, the volume of sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response programming has more than doubled.

38. Recognizing that the lack of access to safe and sustainable energy exposes displaced women and girls to a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, preventing such violence through energy solutions was a priority. Several United Nations agencies took part in the work of a steering committee to guide the development of the Global Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement, launched in July 2018, which emphasized the critical role

of sustainable energy in saving lives, providing protection and reducing exposure to sexual and gender-based violence.

39. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reached nearly 201,000 refugees and members of the local community in Uganda and 32,000 refugees and members of the local community in Ethiopia with support services and awareness-raising. In Kenya, UNFPA supported programmes that provided medical care to survivors of rape and psychosocial support services for refugees in the Kakuma camp and the Kalobeyei settlement.

## **E. Gender equality and the empowerment of women**

40. The need for support to empower women and girls in refugee and host communities and to promote equal access to services and opportunities is recognized in the global compact on refugees. Progress was made in advancing gender equality in programmes by including women and girls in decision-making processes, ensuring individual registration and enhancing access to assistance and services.

41. Recognizing the increasingly protracted nature of humanitarian crises, UN-Women promoted the protection, resilience and self-reliance of women and girls through improved access to resources and services, including livelihood opportunities and cash-based interventions. Throughout the region, UN-Women supported 265 women's organizations in their participation in humanitarian programming. In Rwanda, UN-Women promoted the concept of "positive masculinity" among refugee men, which encouraged men to reject violence and support gender equality and women's empowerment, while strengthening the resilience of women through the development of business skills. In Nigeria, more than 110,300 women and girls were able to gain access to livelihoods opportunities, skills training and psychosocial support services through projects implemented by UN-Women, in collaboration with UNFPA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and partners.

## **F. Child protection**

42. Of the more than 26.4 million persons of concern to UNHCR in Africa, approximately 62 per cent were children, who were at greater risk of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and forced recruitment into armed groups. The need to take into account the specific vulnerabilities and protection needs of children, including unaccompanied and separated children and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, as well as other children at risk, is highlighted in the global compact on refugees.

43. Much attention was given to the protection of unaccompanied and separated children in Africa, who numbered more than 110,000 at the end of 2018. In the Sudan, more than 9,300 unaccompanied and separated children were reunited with their families or placed in appropriate alternative family care. In Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, more than 16,500 unaccompanied or separated children received appropriate alternative care services. UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross strengthened collaboration on family tracing and reunification mechanisms throughout the region.

44. UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued a project aimed at creating stronger links between the protection of refugee children and national child protection systems. In the Sudan, UNICEF and its partners delivered psychosocial support services through child-friendly spaces in schools, while mobile



teams conducted home visits to nearly 211,000 children. In Burundi and Rwanda, more than 42,500 refugee children and adolescents received critical child protection services. In Kenya, UNFPA provided adolescent girls in the Kakuma refugee camp and the Kalobeyei settlement with life skills aimed at strengthening their protection. Through sports, adolescent girls and boys were taught about the prevention of gender-based violence.

45. The child policy of the East African Community sought to include refugee children in national child protection systems and supported Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children, aspiration 9 of which is to ensure that "every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations".

## **G. Stateless persons**

46. Progress was made in the context of key international and regional commitments to eliminate statelessness in Africa. The implementation of the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017–2024 by ECOWAS gained momentum, with Guinea-Bissau adopting, in November 2018, a national plan of action to end statelessness. In East Africa, States agreed to extend the Action Plan of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017–2019 to 2024 and expanded its scope to include a new strategic objective of guaranteeing access to proof of legal identity, including civil registration and nationality documentation.

47. Building on the recommendations of the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa in 2017, a meeting of regional experts was convened by the Government of South Africa in November 2018 to review a draft declaration and action plan on statelessness. These will be submitted to the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for consideration. The States members of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community launched the N'Djamena Initiative on the Eradication of Statelessness in Central Africa, committing themselves to preventing and resolving cases of statelessness.

48. In November 2018, the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons adopted a draft protocol on the specific aspects on the right to a nationality and the eradication of statelessness in Africa. The protocol is intended to ensure equal nationality rights for women and men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and with respect to the nationality of their children. This was a critical step before its final review by the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs and its submission to the African Union Assembly for adoption.

49. Progress was made in advancing the UNHCR #IBelong Campaign to eradicate statelessness by 2024 through a significant increase in birth registration. In Chad, some 35,000 birth certificates were issued to refugee and host community children at risk of becoming stateless. In Côte d'Ivoire, more than 600,000 children at risk received birth certificates, and in Burkina Faso some 35,000 birth certificates were issued. UNICEF and UNHCR supported Governments in providing access to birth registration services in refugee settlements in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Notwithstanding these developments, a lack of resources and of knowledge about the importance of birth registration remained a challenge.

## **IV. Humanitarian operations**

### **A. Emergency response capacity and constraints**

50. Relief efforts were hampered by insecurity in numerous countries, where the delivery of humanitarian assistance was hindered by conflict and violence. In 2018, there were 127 incidents affecting humanitarian workers from the United Nations and its partners. A total of 45 national staff members and 1 international staff member were killed. Kidnappings affected 33 national staff members and 6 international staff. The highest number of deaths and injuries occurred in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. In South Sudan, 123 aid workers have been killed since December 2013, including 16 in 2018 and 9 in the first six months of 2019. In the Central African Republic, the number of attacks on aid workers increased, leading to two deaths and the obstruction of the delivery of life-saving supplies to those in need. Security incidents and congestion at the Douala corridor, through which 90 per cent of World Food Programme (WFP) food commodities transit, resulted in significant delays.

51. High levels of insecurity persisted throughout Somalia, making it one of the most hazardous operations for humanitarian actors. In 2018, 9 aid workers were killed and 22 abducted. With extremist groups spreading their influence throughout the Sahel in West and Central Africa, humanitarian space was severely affected and humanitarian workers increasingly targeted. In Nigeria, the execution of two aid workers in late 2018, in addition to the killing of four others, reflected the heightened risk for aid workers.

52. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, two aid workers were killed in Tanganyika Province in November 2018, leading to the suspension of humanitarian operations. Some of the Ebola-affected areas were inaccessible owing to insecurity, hindering response teams from preventing new infections, while one responder was killed by an armed group in April 2019.

53. Bureaucratic impediments, poor infrastructure, the limited presence of partners and funding constraints continued to undermine the delivery of protection and assistance. Humanitarian organizations faced obstacles importing life-saving medicines and other humanitarian items and experienced delays in the registration of partners from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which also affected the humanitarian response.

54. In some refugee operations, robust action was undertaken to address and respond to allegations of fraud, the misappropriation of funds, misconduct and exploitation. Institutional measures to strengthen integrity, accountability and transparency were implemented throughout the United Nations system.

55. Agencies strengthened their emergency preparedness capacities. Inter-agency contingency planning was carried out in more than 20 country operations. Throughout 2018, UNHCR used its global High Alert List for Emergency Preparedness and the associated diagnostic tool to capture and provide an overview of the levels of preparedness and capacities of operations to respond to potential population displacement. To effectively respond to emergencies, WFP engaged in rigorous planning and used innovative early warning systems to anticipate emergencies and position supplies.

## **B. Food and nutrition**

56. The region displayed the greatest prevalence of hunger in the world, with one in five people categorized as undernourished. The largest hunger crisis occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 13.1 million people were living in acute food insecurity and 5 million children were acutely malnourished. Levels of chronic malnutrition in Burundi were among the highest in the world, with 56 per cent of children under 5 years of age categorized as stunted. More than half of the Central African Republic population of 4.7 million needed food assistance. In Rwanda, more than 149,600 Congolese and Burundian refugees relied almost completely on WFP food assistance.

57. As of February 2019, the WFP monthly food assistance in Uganda was provided exclusively through new food assistance collection procedures in the 13 refugee settlement areas. The UNHCR Global Distribution Tool was used to verify and validate the identity and eligibility of refugees by means of iris and fingerprint scans. Of the 1.1 million refugees living in settlements in Uganda, 90 per cent were estimated to be food insecure.

58. To respond to food insecurity and malnutrition, humanitarian agencies scaled up life-saving interventions. In South Sudan, nutrition cluster partners reached some 518,000 people with assistance. In the Sudan, UNICEF supported the therapeutic treatment of more than 159,000 acutely malnourished children and provided nearly 569,000 mothers with preventative care through mother support groups. UNICEF expanded its nutrition services for 5,900 acutely malnourished children in camps and refugee settlements in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Activities to prevent malnutrition included the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and feeding practices appropriate for young children.

## **C. Health**

59. Refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa were affected by outbreaks of disease, exacerbated by food insecurity and funding shortfalls. Respiratory infection and malaria remained the primary concerns throughout the Horn of Africa, accounting for nearly two thirds of all health visits in 2018. Humanitarian agencies and partners worked with Governments in responding to multiple outbreaks, including cholera and viral haemorrhagic fever in Kenya and Uganda. UNICEF supported the response to the measles outbreak in Uganda.

60. The Ebola epidemic, officially declared on 1 August 2018 in western North Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, led to more than 1,400 deaths. In Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNHCR, UNICEF and partners strengthened preparedness for an Ebola response.

61. WHO strengthened its preventive and curative services for refugees and internally displaced persons, while UNHCR supported Governments in providing primary and secondary services for refugees and host communities in more than 15 countries. In response to the emergency relating to internally displaced persons in Ethiopia, WHO dispatched medical experts and supplies. The life-saving primary health-care services of UNICEF for refugees and internally displaced persons in the Sudan reached 615,400 children, with treatment for diarrhoea, malaria and respiratory tract infections. WHO and partners also addressed mental health problems among refugees and internally displaced persons in Nigeria, South Sudan and Uganda.

62. UNICEF continued to support immunization services in refugee host areas in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Joint United

Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS facilitated a collective, multisectoral response in South Sudan and generated strategic information on the uptake of antiretroviral therapy among refugees and internally displaced persons. It also supported networks of people living with HIV during the response to cyclone Idai in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and partners implemented water, sanitation and hygiene programmes to improve health conditions throughout the region.

63. Agencies advocated the inclusion of refugees in national health systems, with progress in several countries, such as Kenya, Rwanda, the Sudan and Uganda.

## **D. Education**

64. In line with the global compact on refugees, education programmes for refugee children in sub-Saharan Africa supported their inclusion in national education systems, with significant progress made in Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, the Sudan and Zambia. In December 2018, the Global Education Meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization produced an Africa-wide declaration, endorsed by Governments and other stakeholders, which contained calls for the inclusion of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons in education systems.

65. IGAD continued to build on the Djibouti Declaration on Refugees, including through a request for all member States to cost the support for refugee education for improved national planning. In Uganda, two such plans were developed, which are aimed at the inclusion of refugee children in the national system that will benefit more than 277,000 refugee children by 2021. UNICEF and UNHCR also supported inclusive education for refugee children in cooperation with various Governments, including in Rwanda, where some 86 per cent of refugee children were integrated into the national education system. Support from Education Cannot Wait led to the enrolment of more than 4,000 Cameroonian refugee children in Nigerian schools.

66. UNICEF and partners provided access to quality education to more than 400,000 pre-school and school-aged refugee children and adolescents in eastern and southern Africa. In 2019, the education cluster in the Sudan identified 1.4 million children from internally displaced, returnee and vulnerable host communities in need of education. The cluster reached 342,000 of them with education interventions. UNHCR supported cash for education in several countries, which helped to increase access and retention.

67. Through the establishment of temporary learning spaces, education was provided for host and refugee communities, including learning supplies and water and sanitation facilities. In addition to formal education, connected learning initiatives reached more than 4,000 students in 2018, providing accredited tertiary education to refugee and host community students in 23 African countries.

68. The importance of school feeding is increasingly being recognized. In 2018, WFP established a new 10-year strategy that prioritizes support to children in emergencies. In Rwanda, WFP provided meals for refugee and host community children attending the same schools. In January 2019, WFP began to provide meals for refugee school children in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps in Kenya.

## **E. Shelter**

69. The shelter-related needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa continued to grow owing to new displacement, and the United Nations and its partners

worked to identify urgent solutions, in particular for the most vulnerable populations. With 69 per cent of refugees living in non-camp settings, “alternatives to camp” strategies were developed to address the challenges of urban poverty. UNHCR scaled up its shelter response in the region, including by delivering approximately 12,000 “refugee housing units” in 11 operations.

70. In the context of internal displacement, by June 2019, shelter clusters had supported responses through 240 partners and with more than \$150 million in funding. Challenges included obtaining tenure security, which guarantees legal protection from forced eviction, harassment and other threats, and affordable housing. There were 11 activated shelter clusters in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as several working groups for shelter coordination in situations of internally displaced persons.

## **F. Livelihoods**

71. United Nations agencies and partners worked together to promote livelihood opportunities and build resilience among refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, as foreseen in the global compact on refugees. An important milestone was the Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities in the IGAD Region, adopted in March 2019 by ministers for labour and ministers in charge of refugee affairs of IGAD member States. The Declaration supported the right of refugees to work and gain access to labour markets.

72. The International Labour Organization (ILO) strengthened access for refugees and host communities to new market opportunities in the livestock sector in the Jijiga region in Ethiopia, where comprehensive solutions were being applied. In Uganda, the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, UNICEF and FAO supported jobs and livelihoods.

73. In 2019 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNDP has supported some 36,000 refugees in a joint humanitarian-development initiative with UNHCR that benefits both the refugees and the host community. The “graduation approach” in Malawi, Mozambique, the Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe focused on refugees and host community members living in extreme poverty, enabling refugees to become self-reliant, while strengthening social, economic and cultural ties with their host communities. It is intended to benefit more than 280,000 refugees and host communities from 18 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **V. Ending forced displacement**

74. Resolving forced displacement requires a combination of solutions. For refugees, these include the three traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. Complementary pathways for admission to third countries can also provide opportunities to achieve long-lasting solutions for refugees, including through family reunification, educational scholarships and employment opportunities. For internally displaced persons, solutions include return or settlement in another part of the country.

### **A. Voluntary repatriation**

75. Opportunities for voluntary repatriation for refugees remained limited in 2018, when 341,000 refugees were able to return. The largest number, more than 45,500 people, returned to Burundi.

76. The number of Somali refugees in the region continued to decline owing to both organized and spontaneous voluntary returns. Approximately 89,500 of the refugees were assisted in returning between December 2014 and June 2019, the vast majority from Kenya.

77. Increased cooperation between Chad and the Sudan allowed some returns to take place. In 2018, the return of some 1,760 Sudanese refugees was facilitated from eastern Chad to Darfur. In parallel, 5,760 Chadian refugees voluntarily returned from Darfur to eastern Chad. In West Africa, UNHCR supported the return of some 3,300 Ivorian refugees from neighbouring countries, and other examples of small-scale voluntary repatriation included some 3,400 refugees who returned from Malawi to Mozambique.

78. Self-organized returns took place in several countries, including to the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Notwithstanding the volatile situation in the Central African Republic, some 306,200 internally displaced persons and 35,200 refugees returned home. While the political and security situation in South Sudan remained uncertain, spontaneous returns reached more than 136,000 people in 2018, with many returnees now living in a situation of internal displacement.

## **B. Sustainability of returns**

79. Once refugees return to their home country, many face serious challenges, and United Nations agencies and partners work together to render returns sustainable and respond to the longer-term reintegration needs of returnees, including livelihood opportunities and economic self-reliance.

80. In Somalia, efforts continued to create an enabling environment for safe and sustainable returns, in line with the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and the Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, adopted by IGAD in March 2017. Under the ILO “Jobs for Peace and Resilience” programme, a peacebuilding cross-border pilot project to support voluntary return, coexistence and sustainable reintegration in the areas of return was implemented in Somalia. UNHCR and partners worked to enhance education and skills development for Somali refugees, reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance and prepare them for return.

81. In line with the global compact on refugees, WFP implemented programmes in Mali targeting more than 93,000 beneficiaries with activities that contributed to peacebuilding and eventual return. WFP and FAO also launched a cross-border project in Diffa (the Niger) and Kanem (Chad), with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, to prevent intercommunal conflict between farmers and pastoralists in an area where tensions over land and water resources were common. In Burundi, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and FAO supported local capacities in improving access to social services and livelihoods for returnees and local communities.

82. Internally displaced persons also received support to successfully reintegrate into their places of origin. WFP addressed the needs of the most vulnerable with food assistance, while helping to improve long-term food security and resilience by rehabilitating livelihoods and vital infrastructure, such as roads and land. The WFP “Food Assistance for Assets” programme provided vital support to returning internally displaced persons in Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## **C. Local integration**

83. Advances were made in fostering local integration. Guinea-Bissau approved the eligibility for citizenship for Senegalese refugees who had been living in a protracted

displacement situation. As a result, nationality was granted to 7,000 of them. In Liberia, 300 Sierra Leonean refugees were issued nationality and identity documents, and preparations began for the integration of some 8,000 refugees from Côte d'Ivoire. Nearly 2,000 Mauritanian refugee children in Mali were granted nationality.

84. In the Gambia, the authorities took steps to simplify the naturalization requirements for refugees. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the naturalization of refugees who had arrived in 1972 from Burundi continued.

#### **D. Resettlement and complementary pathways**

85. Resettlement remained a key protection tool to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable refugees. Following a decline in available resettlement places in 2017, when a little more than 21,500 refugees had been submitted for resettlement from sub-Saharan Africa, that number increased to more than 36,400 individuals (approximately 45 per cent of UNHCR submissions globally) in 2018. Departures for resettlement countries increased from 15,800 in 2017 to more than 19,300 in 2018, mostly to Australia, Canada, France, Sweden and the United States of America. Almost 60 per cent of the refugees were refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

86. Following the establishment in September 2017 of the Core Group for Enhanced Resettlement and Complementary Pathways along the Central Mediterranean Route, with a call by UNHCR for 40,000 resettlement places, approximately 34,000 refugees had been submitted for consideration by 30 June 2019. They came from the 15 priority countries of asylum: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, the Sudan and Tunisia. Departures from those countries during that period totalled some 16,400.

### **VI. Partnerships**

87. Partnerships with a wide range of actors and organizations, including NGOs, development actors, regional organizations and the private sector, were vital to bringing protection, assistance and solutions to refugees in Africa.

88. In line with the UNHCR refugee coordination model, regional refugee response plans were developed in response to the conflicts in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and South Sudan. More than 224 partners in 15 countries were involved in developing those regional refugee response plans, which served as a common platform for them to plan, deliver and raise funds for the refugee response.

89. The majority of the programmes carried out by the United Nations in Africa were implemented in close cooperation with local, national and international NGOs. NGO partnerships remained crucial for the delivery of life-saving assistance and securing protection and solutions, as well as advocacy efforts, including in comprehensive refugee responses. In November 2018, WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF launched the "UN Partner Portal", an online platform designed to streamline, simplify and strengthen partnerships between United Nations agencies and civil society organizations.

90. Regional organizations continued to play a pivotal role in addressing displacement challenges and promoting solutions in Africa. Notably, regional organizations, including ECOWAS and SADC, held high-level meetings to advance the implementation of the global compact on refugees in their relevant regions.

91. Private sector partnerships increasingly contributed to the delivery of protection and solutions to displaced people, providing support in cash and in kind for shelter, sustainable energy, education, self-reliance activities, sanitation and health care.
92. Progress was made in supporting refugees and host communities through development planning and cooperation. Through the World Bank's international development assistance refugee and host community sub-window (IDA 18), Governments were engaged in a policy dialogue on the inclusion of underserved regions hosting refugees in development planning. The World Bank's engagement also helped to leverage the participation of other development programmes and partners.
93. The World Bank worked with national statistics offices on poverty assessments in Chad, Kenya, the Niger and Uganda. Those assessments led to the preparation of socioeconomic profiles of refugee populations, preparing the ground for future investment by development partners. In Burundi and Zimbabwe, the African Development Bank provided resources from its Transition Support Facility to address the needs of both refugees and host communities.
94. UNDP and UNHCR began to implement a multi-year action plan for comprehensive responses, including durable solutions, in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Ethiopia and Malawi, as well as for the regional responses for the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria.

## VII. Funding

95. Between July 2018 and May 2019, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated \$308 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to support life-saving activities in 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Of that amount, some \$208 million enabled aid agencies to provide humanitarian assistance in response to displacement crises in 16 countries. This comprised allocations from the Fund's rapid response window (\$81 million) and underfunded emergencies window (\$127 million).
96. The Central Emergency Response Fund was instrumental in addressing both the acute humanitarian needs of new displacement triggered by violence in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia and critical gaps in life-sustaining assistance for those in protracted displacement in Djibouti, the Sudan and other countries. The Emergency Relief Coordinator approved \$100 million to respond to climate-related disasters and disease outbreaks in 15 sub-Saharan African countries, including those where displaced people were either directly affected by compounded crises or at risk (e.g., in the context of the cholera outbreak in north-eastern Nigeria).
97. Aid agencies in the Sudan received the highest amount of funding (\$46 million) to scale up life-saving assistance to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, as well as host communities and others affected by deteriorating food insecurity. This was followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$42 million), Cameroon (\$16 million), Ethiopia and the Niger (\$15 million each), and Chad, South Sudan and Uganda (\$11 million each). The sectors that received the largest financial support were health and nutrition (\$28 million each) and water, sanitation and hygiene (\$25 million).
98. In 2018, country-based pooled funds allocated \$366 million to support life-saving humanitarian activities, including in the Central African Republic (\$28.4 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$67.9 million), Ethiopia (\$84.7 million), Nigeria (\$36.1 million), Somalia (\$53 million), South Sudan (\$53.4 million) and the Sudan (\$42.5 million).



99. The World Bank's IDA 18 sub-window has committed almost half of the \$2 billion available to a wide range of projects in 14 countries, including 12 in Africa (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mauritania, the Niger, Rwanda and Uganda).

100. Underfunding constrained humanitarian action on several fronts. The UNHCR 2018 budget for Africa of \$2.8 billion, including supplementary budgets for unforeseen emergencies, was only 44 per cent funded. This led to a reduction in services such as health care and education and affected protection monitoring and livelihood assistance.

## VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

101. Continued conflict and the growing level of forced displacement in Africa had devastating humanitarian consequences and prevented millions of people from returning home. While recognizing these challenges, the global compact on refugees brings with it promising opportunities and prospects. Above all, it recognizes the contributions of host countries in providing protection and keeping their borders open to those fleeing conflict and contains calls for increased support from the international community in response.

**102. The progressive refugee policies and laws enacted by several States in the region demonstrate a continued commitment to refugee protection that must be matched by firm support from the international community. Stronger levels of collaboration, coordination and partnership, including through regional organizations, are already leading to more effective responses in Africa, benefiting both the displaced and host communities. As called for in the global compact on refugees, strengthened engagement by development actors, the private sector and civil society can foster resilience and strengthen livelihoods, laying the ground for solutions. With this in mind:**

(a) **The international community is urged to support the implementation of the global compact on refugees and its programme of action, including robust support to address the growing needs in Africa;**

(b) **States are urged to address the root causes of displacement, support durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons and foster peace, stability and prosperity in Africa, with the vital objective of preventing conflict and averting its grave humanitarian consequences;**

(c) **All parties are called upon to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, including by protecting civilians during armed conflict and preventing serious human rights violations, in particular sexual and gender-based violence;**

(d) **States are reminded of their obligation to respect the right to seek asylum and to keep their borders open to those fleeing conflict and persecution, abiding by the principle of non-refoulement enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and which is a norm of customary international law;**

(e) **All States and non-State actors are called upon to facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to refugees, internally displaced persons and other victims of conflict, to take all appropriate steps to protect humanitarian personnel and to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum and of camps and sites hosting displaced populations;**

(f) **Recognizing the importance of the principle of international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, States, in cooperation with relevant**

stakeholders, are encouraged to provide their full support for the application of comprehensive refugee responses in Africa;

(g) Host countries, in particular, should anchor comprehensive refugee responses in their national development plans, with support from development partners and financial institutions, and to pursue inclusive approaches that promote durable solutions;

(h) In line with the global compact on refugees, the international community should be encouraged to reduce the vulnerability, impoverishment and marginalization of refugees by providing and supporting livelihood opportunities and enhancing access to health care and education, which also contributes to the well-being of host communities;

(i) A robust focus on solutions to displacement in Africa is needed, ensuring that returns are safe, dignified and voluntary, that resettlement opportunities and complementary pathways are increased to a level commensurate with the needs and that the benefits of local integration are explored;

(j) African States that have not yet done so are encouraged to consider acceding to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and to work towards the goal of eradicating statelessness by 2024;

(k) Equally, African States that have not yet signed or ratified the Kampala Convention are encouraged to do so and those that have ratified the instrument are urged to fully incorporate it into domestic law to allow for its effective implementation at the national level;

(l) All actors are relied on to step up their efforts to address the growing levels of internal displacement on the continent, with full respect for the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and rigorous efforts to implement the three-year plan of action;

(m) States are encouraged to support good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law and to promote inclusion and sustainable development, in line with Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals, including by engaging in new partnerships with development actors;

(n) Humanitarian and development actors are urged to pay attention to the needs of women by promoting gender equality, enhancing self-reliance, encouraging their participation in decision-making and empowering them as decision-makers and agents of change;

(o) All parties are called upon to strengthen accountability towards the displaced, including by mitigating the risk of fraud and misconduct and eliminating all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse;

(p) Donors are urged to ensure the availability of adequate, flexible and predictable funding to help to address the unprecedented needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa and to support comprehensive refugee responses by exploring innovative, sustainable long-term and flexible ways of funding;

(q) The international community is encouraged to come together to consider commitments to advance the objectives of the global compact on refugees in preparation for the first Global Refugee Forum, to be held in December 2019.