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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 [76/144](#) on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. It updates the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session ([A/76/290](#)) and covers the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. The report was coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and includes information provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 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.

* [A/77/150](#).

** The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



I. Introduction

1. Forced displacement remained a formidable challenge for the continent during the reporting period. Some 38.3 million forcibly displaced persons were in need of protection and assistance in sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 2021. They included some 25 million internally displaced persons, 7 million refugees, 4.2 million returnees, 1 million stateless persons and 542,000 asylum-seekers. New displacements occurred in the subregions of West and Central Africa, East Africa and the Horn of Africa, and Southern Africa.

2. Across the continent, the protection and humanitarian landscape was characterized by volatility and insecurity. Indiscriminate attacks by terrorist and non-State armed groups, intra- and intercommunal conflicts, socioeconomic fragility, sociopolitical tensions and gross violations of human rights were reported in all regions. In some instances, counter-terrorist measures had adverse effects on the displaced and local populations alike. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and rising global energy and food prices exacerbated the complexity and severity of these factors. New displacement outpaced solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees, while factors such as unconstitutional changes of government, tensions along borders, fragile peace processes, uneasy and complex political transitions and post-crisis challenges impeded progress towards durable solutions to displacement. Consequently, protracted displacement and new complex humanitarian emergencies hampered development gains on the continent.

II. New and complex emergencies

3. In the East Africa, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, conflict, violence and the adverse effects of climate change continued to force people to flee their homes in 2021, including around 9.6 million internally displaced persons and 4.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition, the crisis in Ethiopia drove millions from their homes, causing a further spike in the number of people displaced in a region which has also seen millions displaced in Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan in recent years. In Uganda, the influx of Congolese refugees in the south-western Kisoro district required an enhanced emergency response. The security situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deteriorated further in June 2022, causing further internal displacement as well as forcing thousands of civilians to seek refuge in Uganda and accounting for an increase in new arrivals to the countries of asylum in Southern Africa.

4. In West and Central Africa, violent intercommunal clashes in the Far North Region of Cameroon in August and then in December 2021 displaced some 28,000 people within the country and forced an estimated 44,000 people into Chad. When the clashes erupted again in December 2021, most of the internally displaced persons and refugees had just returned.

5. In Mozambique, the conflict spread to previously safe provinces, with internal displacement increasing in Cabo Delgado Province. Climate change and natural disasters multiplied the risks for displaced communities. In Mozambique, humanitarian capacity was scaled up to respond to the dire situation caused by Tropical Storm Ana, Tropical Depression Dumako and Cyclone Gombe, which affected a total of 936,000 people between January and March 2022. In Angola and Mozambique, climate change and disasters prompted cross-border movements to Namibia and Malawi, respectively.

III. Conflict, insecurity and deficit in governance

6. Terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region spread to coastal countries, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo, while unconstitutional changes of government and sociopolitical instability surfaced, especially in West Africa, East Africa and the Horn of Africa. This impeded sustainable solutions and constrained protection space and humanitarian access to affected populations.

7. In some countries, such as Mali, villages were besieged by non-State armed groups that blocked access to beleaguered villagers and prevented the provision of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian actors collaborated with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and with the transitional authorities to deliver humanitarian assistance to beleaguered villages. In other contexts, innovative access strategies were employed by the United Nations and partners to reach populations in need. These included community-based organizations, remote monitoring and reinforced civil-military collaboration.

8. In the central Sahel, regular attacks against villages and civilians by armed groups forced thousands to flee. In June 2022, in Sitenga, in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, non-State armed groups massacred 86 villagers and displaced over 26,000 people. In other situations, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency military operations carried out by State authorities affected civilians, leading to human rights violations, the loss of life and the destruction of refugee shelters and livelihoods.

9. At times, government authorities limited the movement of forcibly displaced persons and implemented policies that compelled them to relocate to areas deemed safer or simply returned them to their places of origin without security guarantees. In response, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partners advocated for access to international protection, respect for the principle of non-refoulement and the non-profiling of returnees, while assisting Governments in integrating the affected refugees. In situations of conflict-induced internal displacement in the Horn of Africa, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in collaboration with the national protection clusters and other partners, strived to reach out to displaced populations to monitor their situation.

10. In some locations, government or local authorities prevented humanitarian aid from reaching conflict-affected areas, depriving forcibly displaced persons and local communities in need of assistance for an extended period. There were instances where humanitarian workers were declared *personae non gratae* and expelled from the country. However, in most situations, the United Nations was able to negotiate and eventually receive authorization to deliver humanitarian assistance and protection.

11. Insecurity caused by non-State armed groups, especially in operations where return convoys had to travel through insecure areas, was another impediment to the voluntary return of internally displaced persons. As a result, in some instances, government forces supported humanitarian organizations in ensuring the physical protection of the convoys. Moreover, in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic helped with such endeavours.

IV. Climate change and weather-related disasters

12. Across the Sahel, competition over resources, weak governance, and ethnic and religious tensions were often exploited to foment conflict. Competition over scarce resources, amplified by desertification, swiftly rising temperatures and dropping

water levels in the Lake Chad region, provided fertile ground for conflict in Cameroon, leading to the displacement of approximately 44,000 people to Chad. Tensions over water scarcity induced by climate change involving farmers and cattle herders were rife in West and Central Africa, including in the Far North Region of Cameroon and in the Benue State of Nigeria, where the number of internally displaced persons reached 1.5 million in 2021.

13. In East Africa, drought caused massive displacement. As at May 2022, over 286,000 people were displaced owing to drought within Ethiopia; this also had an impact on people who were already internally displaced. Some cross-border movements from the drought-affected regions of Ethiopia and Somalia into Kenya were reported. Similarly, displacement in South Sudan in the first half of 2022 was due largely to climate change. In Burundi, over 90 per cent of 84,800 internally displaced persons were displaced by natural disasters, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

14. In the south-western Indian Ocean, cyclones brought heavy rainfall to Southern Africa. This affected hundreds of thousands of people, causing deaths, injury and the destruction of infrastructure in Botswana, Eswatini, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In South Sudan, 33 out of 79 counties were badly affected by floodwaters, especially in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile States. In the Sudan, an estimated 9,300 people suffered from heavy rains and flooding in Kassala, South Darfur, South Kordofan and White Nile States.

V. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

15. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, containment measures, including border closures, restricted the movement of asylum-seekers, rendering access to asylum difficult in some areas. Despite interventions by UNHCR, incidents of refoulement occurred in some asylum countries. In others, asylum-seekers were stuck in reception centres owing to quarantine measures or because they were not registered at all.

16. By late 2021, most countries on the continent had either reopened their borders to asylum-seekers or implemented measures whereby asylum-seekers could enter under specific or exceptional procedures. For example, in Uganda, despite border closures due to COVID-19, asylum-seekers continued to be welcomed, including 11,000 people fleeing an upsurge of fighting in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in November 2021. Arrivals of asylum-seekers increased by some 25 per cent in East Africa, owing largely to the partial reopening of borders and in part to the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

17. The devastating socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic also meant that previously self-sufficient refugees and asylum-seekers were forced to rely on humanitarian assistance for survival. In some countries, forcibly displaced persons were included in national COVID-19 plans, although vaccine coverage remained low. Through COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, the World Health Organization delivered COVID-19 supplies and equipment worth over \$30 million to 28 countries experiencing humanitarian emergencies in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, UNHCR undertook COVID-19 preventive measures by equipping health isolation and quarantine centres, providing essential medicines, facilitating training for health workers and supporting vaccine delivery efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic and consequent reductions in services affected the registration of newly arrived asylum-seekers, the processing of pending asylum applications and the renewal of documentation.

VI. Protection of refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and returnees

A. Refugees

18. In the East Africa, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, the births of more than 440,000 refugees and asylum-seekers were registered, and more than 65,000 were issued identity documents. In-person registration and identity management activities carried out by UNHCR and its United Nations and government partners improved COVID-19 prevention and containment measures. Ensuring access to civil registration and identity documentation remained a priority.

19. All States in Southern Africa were engaged in the registration and documentation of refugees and asylum-seekers on their territories, except the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. UNHCR and the Governments involved agreed to implement innovative online modalities to process asylum applications and to undertake refugee status determination adjudication. Some services, such as documentation, were also managed remotely.

20. The reporting period also witnessed efforts towards the externalization of asylum and protection obligations, including through plans to transfer asylum-seekers to African countries. These externalization measures designed to deter the arrival of people in need of international protection are contrary to core obligations and standards of international refugee law. They disregard the principles of solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing that lie at the heart of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and undermine the commitments under the global compact on refugees. Externalization measures could render international protection increasingly inaccessible to asylum-seekers and place further burdens on African countries, many of which are hosting large numbers of asylum-seekers and refugees.

21. Sustained positive developments in the area of asylum included pledges made by African States under the global compact on refugees to strengthen asylum systems on the continent. Through the Asylum Capacity Support Group, Denmark, the Netherlands and the European Union Agency for Asylum maintained their support for projects and initiatives in Eswatini, Kenya and the Niger, which were aimed at developing the capacities of asylum systems in these countries.

22. The Regional Protection and Solutions Dialogue for the East and Horn of Africa, convened by UNHCR, the East African Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in December 2021, facilitated the exchange of good practices on refugee management and the operationalization of solutions.

23. In Southern Africa, UNHCR and the Southern African Development Community agreed to pursue the implementation of a five-year joint action plan for 2020–2024 and to operationalize the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. The plan includes measures to foster the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees, improve asylum capacity and bolster opportunities for livelihoods and education.

24. In June 2022, Senegal adopted legislation on the protection of stateless persons. Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Mali were working on bills for the protection of stateless persons and statelessness determination procedures. Furthermore, Kenya adopted a new Refugee Act in February 2022 that includes significant positive changes in policy on refugee economic inclusion, refugee integration and refugee status determination.

B. Internally displaced persons

25. Africa finds itself in an unprecedented internal displacement situation, and yet one resulting from conditions and events that have, for the most part, been as predictable as they are preventable. At the end of 2021, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for more than 80 per cent of all internal displacements triggered by conflict and violence worldwide.¹ This was in addition to displacements triggered by climate-related hazards, as was the case in several parts of the continent. However, the links between climate factors, food insecurity and conflict have become more prominent.

26. Active and escalating conflicts in several countries presented challenges for the United Nations and partners to engage in situations of internal displacement during the reporting period. Human rights monitoring was sometimes conducted remotely by OHCHR, jointly with local partner non-governmental organizations, to enhance communal cohesion and to raise awareness of the challenges faced by internally displaced persons and host communities, including in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon. In Somalia and the Sudan, for example, OHCHR documented cases of sexual and gender-based violence against internally displaced women. In many cases, notably in Somalia, the fragile security situation in camps and settlements for internally displaced persons meant limited prevention and response interventions, including access to justice for the survivors. In collaboration with other partners, the protection cluster coordinated prevention and response activities, in support of national authorities. These activities included efforts to prevent gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, bolster child protection, enhance data collection and analysis and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable persons.

27. Resolving internal displacement requires multifaceted, multi-stakeholder interventions. In response to the report of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, the Secretary-General released his Action Agenda on Internal Displacement in June 2022. The latter is based on three overarching goals: to help internally displaced persons to find durable solutions; to better prevent new displacement crises from emerging; and to ensure that countries facing displacement receive effective protection and assistance. The adoption of the Malabo Declaration following the African Union Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference, held in Malabo in May 2022, signals political will and commitment to address the root causes of displacement and pursue durable solutions on the African continent. Among other issues, African States resolved to take measures to resolve current conflicts, address climate change and disasters, tackle food insecurity and prioritize post-conflict reconstruction and development for refugees and displaced persons.

28. Ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) was ongoing, following a legal mapping exercise and progression towards its incorporation into national laws and policies. Furthermore, progress towards the incorporation of the Kampala Convention into national law was noted in several countries, with the adoption of road maps and bills aimed at completing this process and addressing the remaining gaps in national legislation, in particular for the protection of internally displaced persons in the context of armed conflict.

¹ See www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022.

C. Returnees

29. UNHCR, in collaboration with Governments and other partners, provided protection and reintegration assistance to some 356,000 refugee returnees and 3.8 million internally displaced returnees. Returnees were mostly in the regions of East Africa and the Horn of Africa (2.4 million), Southern Africa (1 million) and West and Central Africa (747,000).

30. In East Africa and the Horn of Africa, UNHCR continued to provide assistance to refugee and internally displaced returnees. In Somalia, many of the refugee and internally displaced returnees were affected by persistent insecurity and the adverse effects of climate change. A state of emergency was declared in November 2021 owing to severe drought, which affected some 80 per cent of the country. Collaboration with ministries of education continued to drive forward the inclusion agenda, with notable progress in the inclusion of refugees and returnees in national education sector plans.

31. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 700 of the 1,000 returnees were internally displaced. In October 2021, UNHCR and provincial authorities in Kasai Province signed letters of understanding to facilitate the delivery of 3,500 birth certificates for internally displaced children, returnees and children in the host community in the localities of Tshikapa, Monkamba, Kapinga Nkundi and Shamusanda.

32. In West and Central Africa, post-return monitoring and community-level engagement were carried out to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees. In addition to refugees, over 53,000 internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin in Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Nigeria.

D. Mixed movements

33. Mixed movements across regions and from the continent to Europe increased, with serious risks associated with trafficking in persons, serious violations of human rights and forced return to situations of danger. Women and children were among the most vulnerable and were more likely to face abuse, exploitation and violence.

34. Onward movements of refugees to northern Africa, across the Mediterranean and towards Southern Africa, as well as the Arab peninsula, were influenced by a variety of factors including the lack of effective protection in first countries of asylum. Using long-standing migration corridors, displaced persons from the central Sahel moved onward across borders to seek both protection and economic opportunities.

35. UNHCR, IOM and partners strengthened community-based identification and referral mechanisms along key routes, although it was clear that much more needed to be done by States to address the situation. In Burkina Faso alone, 6,000 persons involved in mixed movements were identified and over 1,300 were referred to protection services between June and December 2021. Some 32,400 refugees and migrants en route to Europe were disembarked in Libya following rescue at sea or interception, more than double the number in 2020. Many of the people brought back to Libya were arbitrarily held in detention centres or suffered other human rights violations, including at the hands of traffickers. IOM identified seven routes in Southern Africa alone.

36. UNHCR worked with Governments, civil society and refugee communities to raise awareness of the risks associated with dangerous journeys by land and sea, to enhance responses to protection needs in cities, towns and municipalities, at borders

to strengthen search, rescue and disembarkation in the region, and to identify and assist those in need of international protection. During the reporting period, over 2,900 refugees and migrants died at sea en route from North Africa to Europe, and 113 in the Indian Ocean. UNHCR and IOM agreed to develop a regional response plan on mixed movements and to establish a joint coordination mechanism in Southern Africa. Furthermore, OHCHR and the International Labour Organization (ILO) co-led the organization and facilitation of the first 2021 multi-stakeholder consultation on the implementation in Africa of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration on 29 June 2021.

E. Stateless persons

37. Since its launch in 2014, the UNHCR Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024 has made significant headway in resolving the plight of the world's stateless persons, including on the African continent. Through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, efforts were made to raise awareness among parliamentarians in Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda on the importance of accession to the statelessness conventions and the reform of domestic law in compliance with relevant norms and standards.

38. In 2021, several countries in East, West and Central Africa made progress on pledges relating to eradicating statelessness. For example, Rwanda published a new nationality law facilitating naturalization for stateless persons, and all refugees born in Rwanda were registered and issued birth certificates. In Kenya, the Government recognized 50 people of Indian descent, and a petition to recognize people of Pemba descent is under consideration.

39. In the region of West Africa, Togo acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness on 14 July 2021. In April 2022, Senegal adopted groundbreaking legislation establishing a protection regime for stateless persons in the country, modelling Côte d'Ivoire, which first established such a regime in September 2020. The President of Senegal signed naturalization decrees, granting nationality to 51 refugees from Mauritania, who had been in the country for a protracted period of time. In Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and Mali, where bills for the protection of stateless persons were developed with technical support from UNHCR, efforts were under way to finalize and adopt the legislation. Similarly, a draft model law on the protection of stateless persons, statelessness determination procedures and solutions for stateless persons has been developed in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa. The draft model law is pending contributions from civil society organizations and stateless persons, to be finalized and adopted by both regional organizations in accordance with their internal procedures. When adopted, it will serve as a guide and reference to Governments working to introduce statelessness determination procedures in their legal apparatus, while promoting some level of harmonization at the regional level.

40. In Southern Africa, the Governments of Namibia, South Africa and Zambia started to collect quantitative data on statelessness by including related questions in population censuses. In the Congo, following a national population census that had identified 20,000 undocumented people among the indigenous populations, the Ministry of Justice, supported by UNHCR, conducted a birth registration exercise in the third quarter of 2021, reaching indigenous populations and other Congolese. As a result, 5,000 indigenous people received birth certificates. Children in these communities can now attend school, while adults can apply for national identity cards.

F. Efforts to prevent and address gender-based violence

41. Gender-based violence in the region remained of great concern. The joint investigation report of OHCHR and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission documented conflict-related sexual violence, including the widespread use of rape as a tactic of war in regions such as Afar, Amhara and Tigray in Ethiopia. In South Sudan, armed actors deliberately used gender-based violence to humiliate women and girls; over 65 per cent of South Sudanese women reported experiencing sexual or physical violence, double the global average. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, sexual and gender-based violence against female and sometimes male asylum-seekers and migrants was also endemic in Libya. In North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR protection monitoring between August 2021 and March 2022 reported around 4,500 incidents of gender-based violence.

42. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and partners sustained efforts to enhance the protection of women and girls. In Ethiopia, they reached more than 18,000 refugees and host community members through initiatives that promoted access to reproductive health services in the Gambela Region, while the United Nations Population Fund supported a one-stop centre which provided services for survivors of gender-based violence, improving the proportion of survivors who accessed care within 72 hours from 75 per cent to 82 per cent.

43. In South Sudan, UN-Women established a toll-free helpline to provide referral pathways for 450 female survivors of gender-based violence among internal displacement populations or in host communities. Similarly, in the Central African Republic, UNHCR set up a dedicated hotline for survivors, helping to reach those in remote locations. In 2022, free information hotlines were established in Burkina Faso and Mali, in eight local languages.

44. In addition, UN-Women strengthened efforts to respond to gender-based violence by partnering with 300 “male champions” who were trained to support the identification and referral of survivors in Bentiu and Juba, South Sudan. These male champions advocated changes to unfavourable social norms and cultural traditions that led to gender-based violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office supported legal clinics run by non-governmental organizations to provide free assistance to victims and survivors of gender-based violence, reaching more than 1,800 people. UNHCR prioritized community-based approaches and undertook preventive activities, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

45. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mozambique, gender-based violence was perpetrated mostly by armed groups in conflict-affected areas, and survivors of sexual violence in these locations often lacked access to quality services and were threatened by perpetrators. In this context, UNHCR and its partners identified survivors and facilitated the provision of psychosocial and other support to them.

G. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

46. Displaced and stateless women and girls continued to bear the brunt of economic and social risks such as violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, poor nutrition, limited access to life-saving assistance, and labour-intensive, insecure livelihoods. UN-Women and partners worked to ensure the inclusion of women and girls in

economic activities, delivery of life-saving assistance, and decision-making in refugee and displacement contexts.

47. UN-Women extended multisectoral support to displaced women and girls across sub-Saharan Africa to address the compounded challenges and risks they experienced. In Burundi, some 69,000 persons, predominantly women and girls, benefited from the income-generation activities of UN-Women, thereby strengthening their socioeconomic capacities, empowerment and resilience. Similarly, in Cameroon, UN-Women economically empowered some 3,700 women through vocational training and support with business kits. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, IOM, UNHCR and UN-Women, implemented projects aimed at protecting and promoting the participation of women and young people in decision-making, mainly in South Kivu and Kasai Central, reinforcing their access to justice and socioeconomic opportunities.

48. In Uganda, capacity-building initiatives increased women's representation in refugee and host community structures from 66 per cent in 2020 to 76 per cent in some settlements such as Adjumani and 68 per cent in Yumbe district in 2021. In support of ongoing capacity-building initiatives, ILO published a new guide in 2022 entitled *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the World of Work in Fragile, Conflict and Disaster Settings*, which presents key global frameworks and contains practical guidance on gender mainstreaming in crisis settings. These interventions complemented other efforts mainstreamed through food security interventions, economic empowerment initiatives, the delivery of basic social services, and gender-based violence prevention and response programmes.

H. Child protection

49. Forcibly displaced children – both refugees and internally displaced – continued to face multiple vulnerabilities such as abuse, exploitation and violence. Funding shortages undercut sector-wide child protection responses. In the first quarter of 2022, the ratio of children to caseworkers in Uganda, for example, stood at 1:116, over four times the global average of 1:25, highlighting the significant gap in care due to inadequate funding for quality child protection services. In Chad, a shortage of classrooms and teachers, coupled with pressure to accommodate conflict-affected displaced children, severely affected progress in education. A forthcoming sector analysis based on research conducted in 2021, prioritizing equitable access to education, including for children with disabilities, will inform the revision of the education sector strategy.

50. Child protection concerns persisted in many parts of Africa, notably child labour and other forms of exploitation. Co-chairing a child labour task force with the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, ILO contributed to identifying and addressing child labour, a key protection concern in emergencies and other operations. In sub-Saharan Africa, higher rates of child labour were seen alongside levels of extreme poverty that affected two in five people, according to ILO, highlighting the need for inclusion.

51. In partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and others, UNHCR maintained efforts towards the inclusion of refugee children in national child protection systems. In the Sudan, a new joint action plan sought to reinforce interventions and complementarity in securing the protection of children and young people.

52. In Benin, in response to the arrival of 185 refugees, including 107 children, from Burkina Faso following attacks by armed groups, UNICEF distributed sleeping and

hygiene materials, school kits and medicines after aid was first provided by local authorities. In Cameroon, UNICEF assisted a total of 800 vulnerable internally displaced people, including children with disabilities, and supported inclusive education outcomes in six councils in the Far North, Littoral and West Regions. In South Sudan, UNICEF treated some 1,800 children for severe acute malnutrition in 11 refugee camps and strengthened reporting mechanisms on violence against children in Mali. These interventions have benefited hundreds of children. For example, about 336 children, including those unaccompanied or separated due to conflict or displacement, benefited from alternative care arrangements, family tracing and reunification services. Meanwhile, all identified children received interim care and were reunited with their families. Protection was provided to 940 children, including 451 girls, in mixed movements along migratory routes or at risk.

VII. Response to humanitarian needs

A. Security situation for aid workers

53. The significant deterioration of the security situation in many regions in sub-Saharan Africa had a negative impact on humanitarian workers and their work. In 2021, more than 180 serious incidents were reported in which aid workers were killed, injured or kidnapped, with most occurring in the East Africa, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region (99), followed by West and Central Africa (63). Some 270 aid workers were affected, with 83 having lost their lives in the line of duty. The majority of those killed (80) were national aid workers.²

B. Food insecurity

54. The food insecurity of refugees, together with the impact of the global economy and fuel crisis, was cause for deep concern across the continent. The challenges were exacerbated by rising global energy and food prices.

55. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), refugees in 12 countries faced a dire food and nutrition situation. Further reductions in food assistance for forcibly displaced populations were expected, owing to gaps in funding. In Chad and South Sudan, some populations received only 50 per cent of the food they needed. In Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan, food rations were reduced to around 40–50 per cent for over two thirds of refugees as a result of funding constraints. Refugees in Uganda, including those who recently arrived, also faced food insecurity and the risk of malnutrition.

56. High levels of acute malnutrition were reported in refugee settlements in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, the Niger, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where populations were significantly affected by cuts to humanitarian food assistance. In addition, harmful coping mechanisms among women and girls prevailed, making them vulnerable to exploitation, including sexual exploitation. Assessments were conducted to generate evidence-based data to improve food and nutrition programming.

57. Funding shortfalls and food insecurity have further underscored the importance of the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. WFP and UNHCR partnered in resource mobilization for programmes to bolster economic inclusion. The available resources and support of the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub facilitated

² See <http://aidworkersecurity.org>.

interventions to target the most vulnerable populations, while promoting the self-reliance of refugees, such as in Rwanda and Uganda.

58. In collaboration with partners, WFP supported refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons by addressing their immediate food and nutrition needs, as well as advancing resilience and livelihood opportunities.

C. Socioeconomic inclusion and empowerment

59. In Southern Africa, the United Nations and partners mobilized resources for economic inclusion. UNHCR implemented a project funded by the African Development Bank to increase livelihood activities and enhance the well-being of refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, UNHCR worked with the World Bank on supporting socioeconomic inclusion in the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the International Development Association subwindow for host communities and refugees.

60. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the integration of internally displaced persons in the integrated village of Pladama Ouaka, while the durable solutions working group, led by UNHCR and UNDP, cleared more than 200 ha of land to facilitate this. In Burkina Faso, WFP worked with the Government, with support from the World Bank, to include populations under their long-term care in national social safety net schemes.

61. UNHCR enhanced cooperation with the private sector wing of the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation, through a joint initiative integrating humanitarian and private sector solutions for forced displacement. In Burundi, UNHCR, UNDP and partners supported initiatives aimed at improving the socioeconomic empowerment of young people and women through collective income-generating activities. In crisis-affected areas of Burkina Faso, UNDP provided vocational training and income-generating opportunities, including through a “cash for work” initiative that targeted internally displaced persons and host communities. These initiatives complemented long-term livelihood projects which WFP and UNHCR implemented in Burkina Faso. UNHCR undertook a similar programme with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Chad. In Mauritania, UNHCR and WFP supported the development of a national social safety net programme for refugees and the host community in the Bassikounou Department.

62. In several countries, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and UN-Women continued to use cash-based interventions as a key modality to provide protection and assistance. Cash was used for repatriation and to cover energy, shelter, hygiene, livelihoods, education and other basic needs. In Ethiopia, UNICEF used the traditional banking system to disburse cash transfers to internally displaced persons in Amhara and worked with the Government to set up bank accounts, allowing them to receive further cash transfers if needed. In Malawi, WFP successfully shifted to a fully cash-based assistance programme for refugees, with a cash top-up to support nutrition for children aged 6–23 months. In Burundi, most returnees used the multipurpose repatriation cash grants provided by UNHCR to purchase land. In Uganda, UN-Women supported some 2,600 displaced women and 81 men with a multipurpose cash transfer in support of their livelihoods.

63. Furthermore, ILO facilitated the financial inclusion of refugees and host communities through the deployment of its three-dimensional and participatory intervention model, an approach tested in 2021 and 2022 in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda. In 2022, ILO trained 125 trainees in tailoring and implemented a financial literacy programme targeting refugees and the host population that reached

more than 1,000 people. Under the Partnership for Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced Persons and Host Communities implemented in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, ILO, together with UNHCR and UNICEF, further strengthened institutional and individual capacities for refugees and internally displaced persons to have increased access to and actively participate in host communities' economies.

D. Basic social services

64. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization delivered medical supplies and equipment and provided capacity-building support to national health authorities and partners, including to identify and treat mental health conditions. These interventions improved the quality and coverage of health services.

65. Water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives were also ramped up, and displaced communities played an active role in raising awareness about COVID-19 and combating vaccine hesitancy. In Ethiopia, the United Nations Population Fund provided various types of support, including distributing personal protective equipment for front-line health workers.

66. Through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations partners supported numerous initiatives to meet the needs of the vulnerable population living with HIV. In Malawi, for example, refugees and asylum-seekers received comprehensive access to sexual and reproductive health and HIV services as well as to community-led counselling, testing and youth-friendly health services in the Dzaleka refugee camp.

67. In Burundi, partners working under the joint refugee return and reintegration plan supported health-care systems servicing the entire community and enabled them to provide services, including psychosocial interventions, to meet the needs of returnees. As a result, 1,500 young women and 1,000 young men were trained. United Nations partners also trained nearly 170 individuals on COVID-19 preparedness and response plans and conducted awareness-raising for over 120,000 returnees.

68. The COVID-19 pandemic had a marked impact on the education sector. As Co-Chair of the regional education in emergencies working group and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, UNHCR engaged with partners to share best practices and guidance materials to facilitate the safe reopening of schools and minimize school dropouts, especially for girls. It also partnered with the Vodafone Foundation to leverage technology and enhance access to education during the pandemic, providing an instant network school programme that covered 12 schools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

69. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR increased support to ministries of education to improve access for displaced children and young people and to mitigate the impact of insecurity-related school closures. UNHCR built or rehabilitated 140 classrooms and supported 640 schools with water, sanitation and hygiene interventions. In addition, it trained over 2,500 teachers, provided school kits to 20,000 children, made cash assistance available to some 10,500 children and facilitated higher education scholarships for over 1,000 refugees.

70. Unfortunately, in other countries such as Burundi and Uganda, funding shortfalls, poor school infrastructure and prolonged school closures resulted in the loss of learning and increased protection risks. In most cases, girls were disproportionately affected. In some countries, UNHCR and partners supported remedial measures. For example, in Burundi, targeted support was provided to returnee children through catch-up classes. In the Congo, UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance to improve refugee children's access to quality education. In

the Likouala and Plateaux Regions, UNICEF trained 59 teachers on the basics of teaching French and mathematics and provided an educational support package to some 5,000 refugee students, including over 2,600 girls.

E. Shelter

71. The shelter- and settlement-related needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa increased by approximately 40 per cent during the reporting period. This was especially the case in the Sahel region, owing to intensified conflict, insecurity and political instability. An estimated 85 per cent of the displaced population lived in overcrowded conditions, mostly in unplanned camps, makeshift settlements and within host communities in fragile conditions. This problem was compounded by the fact that the shelter response was funded only at the level of 3 per cent, with little hope of a substantial increase in available resources.

72. The United Nations and partners worked to identify urgent shelter solutions for the most vulnerable populations. Thanks to the efforts of existing and new shelter partners, an increase in the delivery of shelter materials in response to the emergency in the Sahel region materialized.

73. In Mozambique, development actors provided multisectoral emergency assistance to displaced populations and host communities. For example, UNDP initiated stabilization interventions in the return areas, camps and resettlement grounds in southern Cabo Delgado, to address multidimensional risks in Mozambique.

VIII. Ending forced displacement

74. Solutions are urgently needed for some 36 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons on the continent. Such solutions will require strong, collective action and multi-stakeholder partnerships, in full and effective consultation with the populations of concern. In this regard, several important initiatives have been taken by intergovernmental organizations and the private sector to expand solutions, and multi-country cooperation has also facilitated this work.

A. Intergovernmental initiatives

75. The African Union held an Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference during the reporting period in Malabo. Among other issues, the summit deliberations highlighted the need for solutions to tackle displacements related to conflict, climate and weather. The declaration adopted at the end of the conference was a confirmation of the political commitment in the region to address the root causes of humanitarian crises. African States committed to promoting and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law in conflict situations by raising the awareness of military personnel on the treatment of civilian populations, most of whom are vulnerable women and children. In addition, States committed to strengthening governance systems at all levels, enhancing the capacity of their institutions in preparedness and response efforts, and shoring up investments in multi-hazard early warning and early recovery systems. Fulfilling these and other commitments is expected to contribute to resolving the displacement crises on the continent, which are predominantly human-made, but compounded by climate change and related disasters.

76. Furthermore, in October 2021, the Southern African Development Community and UNHCR convened a conference, which concluded with recommendations to improve asylum, address statelessness and find solutions for refugees and other displaced people in the region.

77. Under the Solutions Initiative for South Sudan and the Sudan, national solutions strategies were adopted across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, building on the provisions for the displaced contained in the two countries' respective peace agreements. A solutions-oriented, area-based approach was developed targeting high-return areas through investments in medium- to long-term development and peace interventions. In October 2021, on the margins of the seventy-second plenary session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, IGAD and UNHCR co-hosted a special high-level information-sharing session of the IGAD Support Platform on the Solutions Initiative for South Sudan and the Sudan. During the event, the progress made since the launch of the Initiative in 2020 was reviewed and ways to further mobilize political, technical and financial support to take the process forward were explored.

78. Surveys gauging the intention of South Sudanese and Sudanese refugees to return were also launched in the region to inform planning for comprehensive solutions for these two populations under the Solutions Initiative. Surveys were also undertaken for Somali refugees in Kenya under the framework of the Kenya Solutions Road Map.

B. Multi-country initiatives

79. Progress has been made towards resolving the Ivorian refugee situation through multi-country initiatives. In September 2021, a regional ministerial meeting was held in Abidjan on comprehensive solutions for Ivorian refugees. The event brought together government officials from neighbouring countries that host Ivorian refugees, together with the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and other United Nations entities. At the meeting, ministers adopted the Abidjan Joint Declaration on the Updated Road Map for Comprehensive Solutions for Ivorian Refugees, which promoted voluntary repatriation and reintegration alongside socioeconomic integration and permanent residency for Ivorians who remained in host countries.

80. In April 2022, the Government of Cameroon and UNHCR organized a regional ministerial conference on solutions in the context of forced displacement related to the situation in the Central African Republic. The conference brought together the Governments of origin and main countries of asylum, the African Union and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. Conference participants adopted the Yaoundé Declaration, which contains concrete recommendations, including setting up a dynamic regional cooperation mechanism that would mobilize key actors and advocate adequate resources for solutions.

C. Private sector partnerships

81. In the latter part of 2021, UNHCR, in partnership with the Amahoro Coalition, the Government of Rwanda and the Africa Entrepreneur Collective, organized the first-ever African private sector forum on forced displacement, entitled "36 million solutions" in reference to the nearly 36 million forcibly displaced people in sub-Saharan Africa and the potential to find solutions for each of them. Convened in Kigali, the forum resulted in commitments around private sector-led solutions for

forcibly displaced populations in Africa, covering economic inclusion, education, livelihoods and access to health care.

D. Delivering durable solutions

Voluntary repatriation, returns and reintegration

82. Following the September 2021 Abidjan regional ministerial meeting on comprehensive solutions for Ivorian refugees, the cessation clause for Ivorian refugees (i.e. the process to formally end refugee status) came into effect on 30 June 2022, marking the end of an era of displacement for hundreds of thousands of Ivorian refugees. Over 310,000 Ivorian refugees have been repatriated since 2011. Of these, some 37,600 returned during the reporting period. Approximately 15,500 Ivorians remain in neighbouring countries. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has taken several measures in the areas of documentation, continuity of education, socioeconomic inclusion, livelihoods and land restitution to facilitate the effective reintegration of the returnees. At the same time, the countries of asylum committed to taking an array of measures to protect and facilitate the local integration of those who do not wish to return.

83. Over 9,500 Central African refugees were repatriated during the reporting period. Furthermore, over 53,000 internally displaced persons returned to their places of origin in Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Nigeria.

84. In the East Africa, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, 330,000 refugees returned to their countries of origin. This included some 32,600 facilitated returns to Burundi and 296,000 self-organized returns to South Sudan. Approximately 500 Somali refugees were assisted in their return, while 1,800 who returned on their own were provided with support. UNHCR also facilitated the return of 1,800 refugees to Rwanda and 400 refugees to Ethiopia.

Local integration

85. Prospects for local integration were also pursued, including through engagement with development actors in refugee-hosting areas to secure the inclusion of refugees and host communities in long-term development programming.

86. UNHCR supported numerous Governments with the naturalization of refugees and the provision of identity cards. The Government of Eswatini fulfilled its pledge to expand its support of livelihoods for refugees by allocating 1,095.1 ha of arable land for an agricultural project, of which 279 ha were ready for use by April 2022. This allowed refugees to participate in agricultural value chains, while becoming more self-reliant and achieving increased social cohesion.

Resettlement and complementary pathways

87. In addition, UNHCR explored other complementary pathways for solutions, including education, labour mobility and family reunification schemes. Resettlement activities on the continent continued to be hindered by insecurity and political instability, although they gained some traction as COVID-19-related movement restrictions began to ease. During the reporting period, some 28,000 refugees in asylum countries in Africa were submitted for resettlement consideration globally, while there were 12,800 departures from all regions. Most resettled refugees were nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Somalia and the Sudan. The vast majority departed to Canada, France and the United States of America.

IX. Funding

88. During the reporting period, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated \$122.2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to support life-saving activities in 12 countries in Africa that were affected by displacement. This included displacement due to violence, clashes and food insecurity, as well as economic disruption and drought. That amount comprised allocations from the rapid response window (\$47.6 million) and the underfunded emergencies window (\$74.4 million). The Central Emergency Response Fund was instrumental in addressing both the acute humanitarian needs of new displacements triggered by violence in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and South Sudan, as well as critical gaps in life-sustaining assistance for those in protracted displacement in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and other countries.

89. Country-based pooled funds in Africa provided \$493 million to humanitarian partners between January 2021 and June 2022. National and local partners received 25.3 per cent (\$125 million) of the total funding in direct funding, slightly exceeding the Grand Bargain target. This is in addition to funding received by national and local partners through United Nations entities.

X. Conclusions and recommendations

90. **The displacement crises in sub-Saharan Africa continue unabated, while ongoing mixed and onward movements to Europe are a clear consequence of the root causes, both human-made and climate change-related, that have been ignored for decades. As displacement numbers continue to grow, humanitarian organizations must cope with the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, disasters and rising global energy and food prices. Solutions for protracted displacement situations and new, complex humanitarian emergencies can be achieved only through political will and through strong, multilateral cooperation and partnerships, in line with the global compact on refugees. With this in mind:**

(a) **I commend African States for the various national, bilateral and regional initiatives taken to address the root causes of forced displacement. The outcomes of the recent African Union Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference are both relevant and timely. I therefore urge that the recommendations contained in the Malabo Declaration, including the operationalization of the African Union Humanitarian Agency, be implemented without delay. I equally commend the African Union and the European Union for adopting Joint Vision for 2030³ following the sixth African Union-European Union Summit, held in Brussels on 17 and 18 February 2022, which includes a reference to “enhanced and reciprocal partnership for migration and mobility”;**

(b) **I call upon all parties to the current conflicts to engage in dialogue to resolve their differences through negotiations and compromise. It is urgent that, collectively, we “silence the guns” and invest in long-term solutions that aim to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts;**

(c) **I further call upon all parties to the conflicts to respect the independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanitarian character of humanitarian work; to uphold the principles of international humanitarian law,**

³ Available at www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/18/sixth-european-union-african-union-summit-a-joint-vision-for-2030/.

human rights law and refugee law; and to allow unimpeded access to populations in need of protection and assistance;

(d) I exhort those who have made pledges and commitments at the Global Refugee Forum and the high-level segment on statelessness to fulfil those pledges;

(e) Amid the increase in scale and frequency of extreme weather events and the impacts of climate change, I encourage ongoing cooperation at the global, regional and local levels to ensure the adoption of climate-smart measures, and call upon all countries to meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement;

(f) I appeal for the effective implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement, as well as my Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, and in this regard urge all stakeholders to support efforts to find comprehensive, durable solutions to forced displacement, including protracted displacement situations, through continental, regional and other collective efforts; to create conditions conducive to voluntary return, in safety and dignity; and to adopt the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach to foster durable solutions;

(g) Recognizing the gains already made in the implementation of the global compact on refugees and other responsibility-sharing frameworks, I encourage ongoing efforts at easing the burden on refugee-hosting communities and countries, and support more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing;

(h) Recognizing the vital role that women and girls play in communities, and the widening gender inequalities that displacement exacerbates, substantially undermining the role of women and girls, I urge States and humanitarian, development and other partners to shore up their support of multisectoral responses towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, to amplify the voices of women in decision-making and to help efforts aimed at preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence.
