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Strategic partnerships and coordination (including United Nations reform)

Summary

This paper reviews key developments in strategic partnerships since the last report to the eightieth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2021. It provides examples of diverse, inclusive and strategic partnerships that UNHCR is pursuing. It also highlights UNHCR's contributions to the reform of the United Nations development system and other advances, including on localization and enhanced partnerships with development actors.

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I. Introduction

1. In line with the High Commissioner's strategic directions, the Global Compact on Refugees and the reform of the United Nations development system, UNHCR has diversified its partnerships and strengthened collaboration across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. UNHCR's partnership strategy is guided by the following tenets: placing persons of concern at the centre of the response, upholding protection principles, including accountability to affected populations, and supporting governments in the response to displacement. In 2021, strengthened partnerships were pursued with local responders and refugee-led organizations, faith-based organizations, sport organizations and international financial institutions. In doing so, UNHCR aimed to advance the localization agenda, reach new audiences and shift the focus of the response so that it increasingly fosters inclusion and solutions. UNHCR also supported the roll-out of measures under the revamped United Nations development system.

II. Strategic partnerships

A. Inter-agency engagement and United Nations partnerships

- 2. Within the United Nations system, joint efforts with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) helped foster the inclusion of refugees in national systems. The UNHCR-UNICEF "Blueprint for joint action for refugee children" reached some 10 million refugee and host community children, ensuring their inclusion in national educational systems and strengthening child protection. The UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub was leveraged to help move refugees towards self-reliance. This focus on inclusion and strategic engagement with development partners, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization, was maintained throughout the year, despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and some 40 new humanitarian emergencies, which demanded increased humanitarian funding and human resources. Cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) remained critical throughout, both in terms of managing mixed movements as well as in situations of internal displacement.
- 3. UNHCR signed numerous agreements with partners, including in the United Nations system, to bring complementary expertise to efforts to protect and assist refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons. UNHCR signed an agreement with the International Telecommunication Union aimed at enhancing connectivity, broadening humanitarian and protection services, and breaking down digital divides (including with respect to gender) in order to improve the lives of persons of concern and host communities. Digital technology is also being used to reach marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities.
- 4. UNHCR and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) continued to jointly pursue efforts to advance gender equality for women and girls. In the Asia-Pacific region, a series of consultations led to a regional joint action plan building on positive collaboration in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Pakistan, as well as on the thematic areas outlined in the joint letter signed by the two organizations in December 2020. Given the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on persons of concern, UNHCR, the World Health Organization and the Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) continued to make headway in driving vaccine equity. This entailed the delivery of vaccines for both displaced populations and host communities, and support for strengthening the health system in countries such as Bangladesh and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- 5. UNHCR was an active member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), engaged with the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and contributed to the Secretary-General's Common Agenda. Through the Common Agenda, UNHCR has sought to ensure that people are placed at the centre of the response, leverage UNHCR's age, gender and diversity policy, and continue to build a system-wide coalition to combat statelessness. Within the IASC, UNHCR led the results group on accountability and inclusion, and spearheaded the development of guidance on localization, together with the Somalia NGO Consortium. Achievements include expanded membership to the IASC for local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the establishment of a localization repository and the development of a "go-to" platform for guidance on accountability and inclusion.
- 6. In 2022, UNHCR will seek to strengthen inter-agency collaboration, including through taking on a coordination role in efforts to meet the Grand Bargain commitments and leading by example on issues such as simplified partnership agreements, efficiencies within the United Nations system, and work to strengthen and facilitate the work of organizations led by refugees and other persons of concern. With respect to internal displacement, UNHCR contributed to the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, highlighting the need to "unlock" solutions for IDPs and embrace innovative financing and private sector engagement. As a result of the work of the High-Level Panel, the Secretary-General announced the development of an Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. UNHCR is part of the Steering Group established under the Action Agenda and will provide support towards protection and solutions at the global and country levels towards this end. This will include support to Resident Coordinators to facilitate efforts to find solutions to internal displacement.

B. Engagement with civil society and sport organizations

- 7. Consultations with NGOs took place in all regions in 2021, with a focus on localization, community engagement and climate action. At the headquarters level, monthly NGO consultations were co-organized with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies on a range of subjects, including COVID-19 vaccinations, protection and mixed movements. The consultations created an enabling environment for NGOs and UNHCR to exchange views on operational, policy and advocacy priorities. UNHCR published a report highlighting the leading role played by civil society towards implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees as well as a report that outlines best practice examples of innovative solutions developed by refugee-led organizations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8. In line with the localization agenda, UNHCR focused its innovation award on organizations led by persons of concern, established an administrative support cost for national NGOs of 4 per cent and piloted a simplified small-grant partnership arrangement for refugee-led organizations.
- 9. Collaboration was strengthened with faith-based organizations, and new partnerships with an array of actors were formed. UNHCR and Religions for Peace formed a Multireligious Council of Leaders to address the root causes of displacement. UNHCR renewed its memorandum of understanding with the Lutheran World Federation, with the aim of strengthening collaboration in key areas, including refugee resilience and self-reliance; community-managed peace and protection; and strengthened participation of persons of concern. A new agreement signed with the Community of Sant'Egidio will lead to the establishment of a community sponsorship programme, allowing for the legal and safe arrival of refugees into Europe. A memorandum of understanding with Miles4Migrants has raised over 256,500 miles to be used by refugees to support travel for family reunification, while the partnership with Powercoders International supported the expansion of an information technology job integration programme for refugees through training, internship placement and access to employment in different countries in Europe. The partnership with the Scalabrini International Migration Network Inc. was formalized through a memorandum of

understanding, which focuses on emergency assistance and shelter as well as services along key routes in border areas and strengthened engagement with cities and municipalities.

- 10. UNHCR also sought to leverage new and existing partnerships that would provide an opportunity for the organization to reach fresh audiences, combat xenophobia and racism, and raise awareness about the positive contributions of refugees to society. With this in mind, UNHCR supported the participation of the Refugee Olympic and Refugee Paralympic Teams Team in the 2020 Tokyo Games (held in 2021), and worked with the International Paralympic Committee, the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Refugee Foundation to ensure refugees had access to sport at both amateur and elite levels. The power of sport to highlight refugees' resilience and combat negative stereotyping cannot be underestimated. The Tokyo Olympics generated nearly 10 million pieces of media coverage and over 160 million tweets, of which 10 and 12 per cent respectively highlighted refugees and the work of UNHCR.
- 11. A new cooperation agreement was signed with the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) which facilitated messaging on refugee issues to be broadcast to wide audiences during the European Football Championships, and UNHCR partnered with the Global E-sports Federation to share messaging to a new audience during the inaugural Global Esports games in Singapore. Partnerships were also developed with Cricket Without Boundaries, the International Chess Federation and World University Service of Canada which saw 3 refugee athletes resettled through a new complementary pathway focused on sport.
- 12. The Sport for Refugees Coalition, formed around the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, held its first stocktaking meeting and made significant contributions to the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021, including holding a dedicated side event on the contribution of sport to refugee self-reliance. UNHCR also became the first co-chair of the newly formed United Nations Inter-Agency Group on Sport for Development and Peace, alongside the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

C. Reform of the United Nations development system and partnerships with international financial institutions

Reform of the United Nations development system

- 13. UNHCR continued to engage in the reform of the United Nations development system. It contributed to the Handbook for the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator launched in March 2021, including on coordination of refugee responses, and signed a joint letter with the United Nations Development Coordination Office addressed to Resident Coordinators and UNHCR Representatives, providing a "menu of options" for joint activities at the country level. UNHCR issued internal guidance to ensure alignment with the United Nations country-level management and accountability framework, and held a series of webinars to incentivize staff to work with the revamped Resident Coordinator system. The inter-agency learning programme, to which over 500 UNHCR staff applied in 2021, included a specific focus on the United Nations development system and UNHCR's role in supporting measures under the roll-out. Financially, UNHCR supported the Resident Coordinator system with \$2.5 million, through the United Nations cost-sharing agreement.
- 14. UNHCR co-leads a number of platforms established under the reform of the United Nations development system, which provide support towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. These include issue-based coalitions, which are

¹ Issue-based coalitions act as regional task forces to facilitate improved cooperation and synergies among different United Nations entities and their partners. These broad, multi-partner coalitions coordinate the response to cross-cutting challenges on a range of policy issues, such as health, gender equality, social protection, environment and climate change, and sustainable food systems.

- contributing to data and analysis, and capacity-building for local and government actors. While UNHCR strives to engage wherever relevant, the multiplicity of platforms and coordination arrangements established through the reform of the United Nations development system can be challenging, especially for small offices within the organization.
- 15. In 2021, UNHCR partnered with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Coordination Office to showcase progress made by the 15 United Nations entities that made pledges made under the Global Compact on Refugees towards the inclusion of refugees in development plans and in national systems. The achievements made were highlighted in a report, and the participating entities agreed to 10 actions to accelerate delivery against the common pledges to be pursued before the next Global Refugee Forum in 2023. Regional refugee response plans (such for the Syria crisis, which is co-led with UNDP) continued to ensure links between humanitarian action, resilience activities and development approaches.
- 16. In the last quarter of 2021, UNHCR adhered to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee recommendation on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which aims to strengthen coherence among these spheres. UNHCR remained an active member of the IASC results group on the humanitarian-development nexus, co-facilitated the issuance of "Light guidance on collective outcomes", helped map good practices in this area and contributed to the design of the "Nexus Academy" to support staff and collaboration across the United Nations system. UNHCR also partnered with UNDP on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, as well as on the rule of law, and local governance and peacebuilding initiatives.
- 17. UNHCR supports the "efficiency agenda" under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including the rollout of the Business Operations Strategy across more than 130 countries, the piloting of Local Shared Service Centers, the pursuit of common remises, where possible, and the operationalization of "mutual recognition". UNHCR has seconded a colleague to the United Nations Development Coordination Office to support the technical roll-out efforts and is focused on advancing global shared services, where the scope for efficiency gains and transformation are the greatest. UNHCR's alignment with the United Nations development system reform was highlighted in the report to the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, through which the General Assembly assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operational activities for development (see annex).
- 18. Tackling the root causes of forced displacement, including conflict, is highlighted in the Global Compact on Refugees as the most effective way to achieve solutions to displacement. UNHCR held internal webinars offering guidance on how engage with the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund. The Fund is being catalysed to support programmatic implementation of peace-building related pledges made by countries hosting refugees under the Global Compact on Refugees.

Partnerships with international financial institutions

19. Close collaboration with the World Bank Group led to additional funding for refugee host countries. Between mid-2017 and mid-2022, some \$2.46 billion will have been allocated for 45 projects in 14 low-income countries through the World Bank's International Development Association's regional sub-window for refugees and host communities. A further \$380 million will have been made available through concessional grants for 18 projects, leveraging a total of \$1.96 billion in loans to 4 middle-income countries.

More information about the efficiency agenda is available from https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/business-operations.

20. UNHCR increased its engagement with regional multilateral development banks in 2021 to ensure that forced displacement situations would be reflected in their policy and programme development. A memorandum of understanding was concluded with the Inter-American Development Bank and an exchange of letters with the Asian Development Bank. Collaboration with the African Development Bank led to projects benefiting displaced persons in Zimbabwe, the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, and in the Sahel.

III. Coordination of the refugee response and in situations of internal displacement

A. Refugee response

- 21. The provision of international protection, assistance and solutions is embedded in UNHCR's Statue, and a multi-stakeholder approach, as underscored in the Global Compact on Refugees, is key to ensuring a cohesive and comprehensive response. The refugee coordination model continues to provide a framework for ensuring effective leadership and allowing host governments and donors to know who is doing what. Looking ahead, more work needs to be done to ensure that refugee response plans provide a central role to refugees and local actors, and that they adequately take into account emerging risks, such as climate-related events.
- 22. In 2021, seven regional refugee response plans were issued, covering the inter-agency response in 40 refugee-hosting countries resulting from the crises in Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Other mechanisms, such as the regional refugee and resilience plan in response to the Syria crisis (co-led with UNDP) and the regional refugee and migrant response plan for refugees and migrants from the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela (co-led with the International Organization for Migration) helped garner funds and ensure a link between humanitarian action, resilience activities and development approaches. UNHCR and IOM also co-led the joint response plan for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh.
- 23. The 2021 inter-agency response plans for refugees mobilized over 800 partners to help protect and assist some 15.5 million displaced persons and support some 9 million people from host communities. The appeals covered 40 refugee hosting countries and amounted to \$10.7 billion. In total, some \$3.7 billion (35 per cent) was mobilized through the regional refugee response plans for the large-scale refugee situations mentioned above. The support platforms under the Global Compact on Refugees (the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (MIRPS) in Central America and Mexico, the support platform for the solutions strategy for Afghan refugees, and the support platform facilitated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the East and Horn of Africa) are also helping foster solutions and augment regional refugee responses.
- 24. Through the regional refugee response plans, UNHCR and partners delivered a wide range of assistance, addressing the most urgent humanitarian requirements, while also responding to development and socioeconomic needs. Where appropriate and where refugees make up a smaller proportion of the total displaced population (such as in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), the refugee response may be elaborated through a distinct chapter in inter-agency humanitarian response plans. In 2021, 19 out of 25 humanitarian response plans included UNHCR-led multisectoral refugee response chapters.

B. Internal displacement

25. In 2021, UNHCR supported the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, highlighting that addressing internal displacement is crucial

to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the country level, such as in Somalia, UNHCR supported the Resident Coordinator and United Nations country team to develop and advance an overarching IDP protection and solutions strategy, grounded in evidenced-based analysis. Action-oriented approaches addressing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus are being enabled across UNHCR's 36 IDP operations. As a core Steering Group member, UNHCR has contributed practical experience in IDP protection and solutions in the development of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

- 26. Under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNHCR continues to lead the protection cluster, co-lead the shelter/non-food items cluster with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), and co-lead the camp coordination and camp management cluster with IOM. UNHCR leads the shelter and camp coordination and camp management clusters in forced displacement situations, while IFRC and IOM respectively lead these clusters in natural disaster settings.
- 27. In 2021, the global protection cluster collaborated with the Norwegian Refugee Council as well as with UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Mine Action Service with the aim of strengthening child protection, preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and enhancing mine action activities. UNHCR led 27 of the 32 activated country-level protection clusters or sectors, of which 16 were co-facilitated by international NGOs, including the Danish Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee and the Norwegian Refugee Council. The cluster's annual global protection forum featured four thematic segments held during the year, which brought together thousands of colleagues across regions and organizations. These sessions fostered cross-learning and collaboration; drew attention to critical funding gaps, hindering the ability of national actors to deliver life-saving protection responses; fostered dialogue on current protection priorities, emerging issues and good practices; and saw the release of the annual "centrality of protection" review, reflecting on the state of protection in 2021, while showcasing work of the protection clusters in places such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Yemen.
- 28. While co-leading the global shelter cluster with IFRC, UNHCR led 19 out of 31 shelter clusters or cluster like mechanisms. During the year, the cluster launched its Information Management and Assessment Toolkit to complement the Coordination Toolkit. The annual meeting of the cluster brought together over 1,400 participants to discuss best practices and shelter solutions. In 2021, the cluster published the eighth edition of the shelter projects publication, which provides cases studies of humanitarian shelter responses from 2019 to 2020. Support capacity for the cluster was also increased, with the addition of an Advocacy Focal Point, Research Focal Point and a Roving Cluster Coordinator and Information Management Officer.
- 29. In 2021, new camp coordination and camp management clusters/working groups were activated under UNHCR leadership in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. Of the 22 active clusters and working groups, UNHCR leads 17, covering some 10 million IDPs. During the year, UNHCR increased the number of experts in camp coordination and camp management, funding an additional 10 staff members. In partnership with the London School of Economics, the cluster initiated global consultations to enhance environmentally-friendly practices in IDP sites and to develop and share common best practices. Both the shelter and the camp coordination and camp management clusters stepped-up their efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including through the recruitment of experts and by conducting a campaign during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Annex

Funding compact: UNHCR contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) commitments (as of end December 2021)

Commitment	Indicator	UNHCR Inputs
To increase collaboration on joint and independent system-wide evaluation (ISWE) products to improve UN support on the ground	% of UNSDG Evaluation Offices (EO) engaging in joint or ISWE; Baseline[1] (2018): 10/35 or 29% of EOs have engaged in joint evaluations; Target (2021): 75% of EOs will have engaged in a joint evaluation; Baseline (2018): 7/35 or 20% have engaged on an ISWE product; Target (2021): 50% of EOs will have engaged in at least one ISWE	UNHCR's Head of Evaluation is Vice-Chair of the UN Evaluation Group. Evaluation staff participate in UNEG working groups. In 2021, UNHCR has been involved in 2 (two) joint evaluations (UNHCR/UNICEF Blueprint, Inter Agency Evaluation Yemen) and is engaging in one System Wide Evaluation (Global Humanitarian Response Plan, COVID-19).
To strengthen the clarity of entity-specific strategic plans and integrated results and resource frameworks and their annual reporting on results against expenditures	Fraction of UNSDG entities that in their respective governing bodies held structured dialogues in the past year on how to finance the development results agreed in the new strategic planning cycle; Baseline (2017): 17/27 or 62%; Target (2021): 100%	YES: UNHCR holds 3 Standing Committees (March, June, September) prior to its Executive Committee in October. At these three occasions, funding and budget issues are discussed with Member States. In 2021, UNHCR launched a new Results-Based Management (RBM) approach for strategic planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting, which introduced a shift from annual planning to multi-year planning (COMPASS). UNHCR's Global Results Framework is an expression of UNHCR's Strategic Direction and mainstreams the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. It positions UNHCR's normative and operational support to refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons (hereinafter persons of concern) within the overall framework of the 2030 Agenda. The corporate position was developed through a consultative assessment and policy formulation process that identified the most critical SDGs as well as core areas of engagement to leverage the SDGs for UNHCR's persons of concern. It also identified the most relevant SDG targets and indicators for persons of concern, some of which have been included in UNHCR's core set of indicators, further aligning UNHCR's reporting with SDG reporting. UNHCR issued a provisional and internal operational guide on UNHCR's engagement with the SDGs and UNSDCF that aims to provide UNHCR's Country Operations with considerations and parameters for operationalizing UNHCR's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and guiding UNHCR's contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). UNHCR continues incorporating the mandates of the QCPR and UNDS-related resolutions, where applicable to UNHCR's programmes. Guidance notes on QCPR, the UN Reforms and its streams – Funding Compact, RC System, MAF – have been produced to inform country offices and ensure alignment with the reform process at regional and country levels. UNHCR is developing a guidance note on the RC performance appraisal. To enhance knowledge and understanding a webinar series – targeting Representatives and Programme staff – were o
	Fraction of UNDS entities individually submitting financial data to CEB; Baseline (2017): 27/39 or 69%; Target (2021): 100%	YES: UNHCR reported financial data for 2020 within the 2021 CEB financial collection exercise.
To strengthen entity and system-wide	Fraction of UNDS entities publishing data as per the highest international transparency standards;	YES: UNHCR regularly publishes budgetary, contribution, results and other data on IATI.
transparency and reporting, linking resources to SDG results	Fraction of UNDS entities with ongoing activities at country level that report expenditures disaggregated by country to the CEB; Baseline (2017): 18/39 or 46%; Target (2021): 100%	YES: UNHCR reported expenses by Location for 2020 within the 2021 CEB financial collection exercise. Geographical locations under which financial information can be reported include country level.
	Fraction of UNDS entities that report on expenditures disaggregated by SDG; Baseline (2017): 6/29 entities or 20%; Target (2021): 100%	YES: UNHCR reported expenditures for 2020 by SDG within the 2021 CEB financial collection exercise.
To increase accessibility of corporate evaluations and of internal audit reports, within the disclosure provisions and policies set by governing bodies at the	% of UNDS entities authorized within disclosure provisions and policies who have made their corporate evaluations available on the UNEG website; Baseline (2018): 10/48, or 21%; Target (2019): 100%	UNHCR evaluation policy (https://www.unhcr.org/research/eval/3d99a0f74/unhcrs-evaluation-policy.html - para 39) requires public disclosure of evaluation reports and management responses. 100% of corporate evaluations (avg 10/year) completed by UNHCR are shared with UNEG and published on their website.

Commitment	Indicator		UNHCR Inputs
To increase visibility of results from contributors of voluntary core resources, pooled and thematic funds and for program country contributions	Specific mention of voluntary core fund contributors pooled and thematic fund contributors, and program country contributions in UNCT annual results reporting and entity specific country and global reporting (Y/N); Baseline (2018): n/a; Target (2020): Y		YES: UNHCR produces Global Report with dedicated sections for various incomes. See: reporting.unhcr.org
To implement the Secretary-General's goals on operational	% of UNSDG entities that report to their respective governing bodies on efficiency gains; Baseline (2018): 12/29 or 41%; Target (2021): 100%		The issue of efficiencies is regularly discussed during UNHCR's Standing Committee in September, Executive Commitee in October, in the ACABQ twice yearly, and during UNHCR's Informal Consultative Meetings (ICM), two of which were held in 2021 to discuss the 2022 budget.
consolidation for efficiency gains	% of UNSDG entities that have signed the High-Level Framework on Mutual Recognition; Baseline (2017): 11/39 or 28%; Target (2021): 100%		UNHCR signed the Framework in November 2019.
report on approved cost- recovery policies and	Fraction of UNDS entities that report annually on the implementation of their approved cost recovery policies and rates to their respective governing body; Baseline (2017): 15/29 or 51%; Target (2021): 100%	ŀ	UNHCR changed its cost recovery (Indirect Support Costs) policy as of 1 January 2020 (lowered from 7% to 6.5%). Funds collected through the ISC mechanism are reported in UNHCR's annual financial statements, Global Report and other locations.