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**Update of UNHCR's operations in Africa****A. Situational context**

The sub-Saharan Africa region remains host to the largest number of persons of concern to UNHCR. By the end of 2017, there were an estimated 24.2 million people of concern in the region, an increase of 4.6 million since 2016. This includes 6.3 million refugees and 14.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the first half of 2018, the numbers increased, with some 170,000 new refugees and over two million new IDPs - mainly from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan.

The complex humanitarian situation was compounded by other factors, including drought and food security, which brought some areas to the brink of famine. Due to global funding shortages, nine operations are currently affected by food ration cuts (Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia), where the affected population is estimated at some 2.4 million people. In addition, insecurity and lack of humanitarian access, have severely constrained the ability of UNHCR and its partners to respond to emergencies and to deliver protection and solutions to those in need.

While solutions remained limited (particularly local integration and resettlement opportunities), organized voluntary returns took place for smaller groups of refugees from Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan.

*Central Africa and the Great Lakes*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo was severely affected by new waves of displacement in the east, including in Tanganyika and South Kivu provinces, while intercommunal conflict in the Kasai region resulted in internal displacement and movements across the border to Angola. This brought the total number of IDPs to over 4.5 million, while the number of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the region increased by 16 per cent, from 537,000 to 620,800. These figures are expected to rise significantly due to political uncertainty linked to the presidential elections in December 2018, potentially generating further violence. The Democratic Republic of the Congo also continued to host nearly 542,000 refugees, mainly from Rwanda (219,000), the Central African Republic (182,000) and South Sudan (91,000).

The situation in the Central African Republic deteriorated due to widespread violence and clashes between rival armed groups, as well as an increase in reprisals targeting the civilian population. By the end of June, nearly 1.3 million people had fled their homes, including some 687,000 IDPs and over 568,000 refugees in neighbouring countries. This is the highest recorded level of displacement since the beginning of the conflict in 2013. The situation remains complex, with an unstable security environment, restricted access to many areas and limited resources to meet the needs.

The Burundi refugee crisis entered its fourth year, and refugees continued to arrive in neighbouring countries – although less than in previous years. There are currently over 169,000 IDPs and some 430,000 Burundi refugees in the region. Severe underfunding is challenging the ability of UNHCR and its partners to meet the minimum standards of humanitarian assistance. While conditions for organized returns are not yet in place, since

September 2017 UNHCR has continued to assist refugees who wish to return on their own from the United Republic of Tanzania.

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

Following renewed violence that broke out in South Sudan in July 2016, there are now an estimated 2.5 million South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries and 1.8 million IDPs. This makes the South Sudan situation the largest displacement crisis in the region. Compounded by a general state of lawlessness and severe food shortages, population movements across borders continue, with 84,000 South Sudanese refugees arriving in neighbouring countries during the first half of 2018. The signature of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement between Parties to the Conflict in South Sudan in June 2018 marked an important step towards securing peace in the country.

Somalia remains one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world, with more than 2.65 million people internally displaced and some 820,000 Somali refugees in the Horn of Africa and Yemen as of mid-2018. The humanitarian situation remained serious, with recent flooding affecting more than one million people in the central and southern regions.

In Ethiopia, drought and violence in the south-west have led to a significant rise in internal displacement, especially along the borders of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' region and the Oromia region, leading to the internal displacement of an estimated one million people. As a result, the number of IDPs in Ethiopia increased to some 2.8 million as of mid-August 2018.

#### *West Africa*

The situation in the sub-region, particularly in the countries surrounding the Lake Chad Basin, was characterized by multiple armed conflicts, violent extremism and human rights violations, coupled with growing poverty, severe food and water shortages, and drought. This triggered significant population movements towards northern Africa, as well as within and across borders in large swathes of western Africa.

Five years into the crisis in Nigeria, the displacement situation remained grave, with ongoing hostilities in the north. As of end July, there were close to 2.4 million IDPs in the country and over 227,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Violent attacks have increased, leading to a rise in civilian casualties, and humanitarian access to IDP sites remains limited. UNHCR has continued to voice concern about the voluntariness of the returns from Cameroon to Nigeria, noting that the minimum conditions of safety were not yet in place.

In Cameroon, population movements remained dynamic in the Far North region due to the activities of cross-border insurgents, and maintaining asylum space and respect for the principle of non-refoulement was of particular concern. In the second half of 2017, Nigeria began receiving large numbers of Anglophone Cameroonians, exacerbating the already complex humanitarian situation in the country. As of the end of July 2018, some 239,000 people were internally displaced, and there were 24,000 Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria.

In Mali, the volatile situation in the northern and central parts of the country, as well as insecurity in the border areas, led to continued displacement. As of June 2018, there were some 51,800 IDPs in the country and more than 130,000 refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. In 2018, approximately 30,000 refugees were newly displaced, including 11,500 people who fled from Mali to the Tillabéri region of Niger. At the same time, the deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso has also led to the internal displacement of approximately 15,000 Burkinabé citizens as well as the flight of over 7,000 to Mali.

#### *Southern Africa*

The situation in Southern Africa continues to be relatively stable with improving prospects for the voluntary repatriation of Namibian, Mozambican and Zimbabwean refugees. Angola and Zambia continued to receive Congolese refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## **B. Achieving the global strategic priorities**

### **(i) Redoubling efforts in the search for durable solutions**

#### *Comprehensive solutions*

UNHCR is pursuing a comprehensive solutions approach in sub-Saharan Africa, in partnership with a wide range of humanitarian and development actors, and in close cooperation with governments. Regional refugee responses for the Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and South Sudan situations are increasingly integrating a solutions approach by building self-reliance and resilience.

#### *Voluntary repatriation*

During the first half of 2018, UNHCR supported the voluntary repatriation of over 37,000 refugees. The largest refugee returns were of Burundian refugees who repatriated voluntarily from the United Republic of Tanzania. In 2018, close to 19,000 Burundian refugees were assisted to return from both Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania

UNHCR continues to seek durable solutions for Somali refugees; close to 120,000 have been assisted to return since December 2013. This includes 7,000 who have returned in 2018 from nine different countries of asylum, despite challenges relating to drought, food shortages, ongoing insecurity and a lack of services in some areas.

From April to June 2018, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of over 350 Sudanese refugees from Chad. At the same time, 4,800 Chadian refugees were assisted to return from Sudan since December 2017. The return of these refugees is governed by voluntary repatriation tripartite agreements concluded between the two governments and UNHCR in May 2017.

Despite the precarious security situation in the Central African Republic, nearly 650 Central African refugees were assisted to return from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Congo (Republic of), Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger and Senegal, and more refugees will be assisted in the coming months.

In the first half of 2018, over 1,000 Ivorian refugees repatriated from Liberia, and a further 2,000 more will be assisted by year end. UNHCR is currently working with the Government of Malawi on modalities to assist over 2,500 Mozambicans who have expressed interest in returning. In addition, UNHCR is planning to provide support to smaller numbers of refugees from Namibia and Zimbabwe who have expressed their intention to return from neighbouring countries.

#### *Local integration*

Several countries enabled the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, as foreseen in Article 34 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In Guinea-Bissau, the Government granted citizenship to Senegalese refugees living in a protracted situation. In the context of the Nairobi Declaration, both Ethiopia and Kenya pledged to integrate certain groups of refugees.

The Government of Liberia is making progress on the naturalization of 300 former Sierra Leonean refugees and has agreed to implement a national framework for the local integration of refugees. The Government of Zambia started issuing temporary residency permits to former Rwandan refugees (more than 1,470 have been issued thus far), which will facilitate their stay and participation in the socio-economic development of their host communities.

Building on the initiative of the Government of United Republic of Tanzania to naturalize more than 160,000 Burundian refugees who arrived in 1972, a joint UNHCR-Government verification exercise will resume during the course of 2018. The exercise will enable more members of this group in the Kigoma region to have access to this durable solution.

In the Central African Republic, UNHCR is currently working the Government to support the integration of the residual caseload of Sudanese refugees in Bambari (nearly 200 individuals) who have opted to remain following the voluntary return of some 1,500 refugees in December 2017.

### *Resettlement*

Resettlement continues to serve as a protection tool to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable refugees. After a steady increase in resettlement submissions from Africa between 2012 and 2016, the trend reversed in 2017, with just over 21,500 refugees submitted for resettlement, owing to a drop in available places – a 51 per cent decrease compared to 2016. Departures for resettlement countries also declined from 38,900 in 2016 to 15,800 in 2017. Around 60 per cent of all submissions from the region involved refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan.

### **(ii) Promoting a favourable protection environment**

The comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) is currently being rolled out in eight countries in the region: Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Somalia and Zambia, as well as through a regional approach for the Somali refugee situation, which is supported by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Following the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, together with its Plan of Action, IGAD has held a series of regional thematic conferences, with support from the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNHCR and the World Bank. The first two focused on refugee education (which led to the Djibouti Declaration and Action Plan) and health, while the third planned for the last quarter of 2018 will address livelihoods and self-reliance.

Cooperation with the World Bank Group was strengthened through an increasing number of joint activities at the field level, including where their International Development Association (IDA) 18 sub-window for refugees and host communities has been launched. Financing was approved for Cameroon (\$274 million towards access to health care, education, social safety nets, and social and economic infrastructure), Ethiopia (\$202 million towards economic opportunities for refugees and host communities) and Uganda (\$360 million for infrastructure and \$335 for water management to improve service delivery).

### *Mixed movements*

The identification and protection of persons of concern in mixed movements is a priority issue of concern in the region. Movements continued to take place across the Sahara towards North Africa, particularly Libya, and to the central Mediterranean Sea towards Europe, as well as from Central Africa and the Great Lakes to southern Africa, and from the Horn of Africa across the Red Sea to Yemen.

UNHCR worked in close co-operation with other stakeholders to ensure protection for refugees in mixed flows. An evacuation transit mechanism (ETM) was established by UNHCR in Niger in late 2017, with support from the Government of Niger and the European Commission. It provides access to protection and solutions for vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees evacuated from Libya. So far, some 1,860 individuals have been evacuated to Niger, while nearly 370 have been resettled. UNHCR is also strengthening its collaboration with the African Union and the European Union on mixed movements in the region through the joint AU-EU-UN joint task force on migration.

### *Statelessness*

Steady progress continues to be made on reducing statelessness in the region. In West Africa, implementation of the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017-2024 by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) continued, with Burkina Faso and Mali officially adopting national action plans to eradicate statelessness. Burkina Faso also acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Two meetings of experts took place in Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa to review and finalize the African Union draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. The draft protocol is expected to be submitted to the African Union's Technical Committees on Migration and on Legal and Judicial Affairs by the end of 2018, before presentation to member States for adoption.

In Madagascar, following recent changes in the nationality law, more than 1,360 nationality certificates were issued to children who were not previously registered as Malagasy citizens, as they were born to Malagasy mothers and foreign fathers. In Guinea-Bissau, nearly 2,000 refugee children were issued with birth certificates.

Within the framework of the #IBelong campaign to end statelessness by 2024, regional workshops were organized for the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR) focal points and parliamentarians in 2018. Additional regional dialogues with relevant government focal persons and the involvement of regional economic bodies are scheduled to take place in 2018. The aim is to stimulate State engagement ahead of the High Commissioner's 2019 high-level event to commemorate the mid-point of the #IBelong campaign.

### **C. Financial information**

The comprehensive needs budget for Africa for 2018, which was approved by the Executive Committee at its annual plenary session in October 2017, amounted to \$2.6 billion. By August 2018, the budget increased by \$157.5 million – mainly due to supplementary budgets established in response to the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, as well as in response to the Central Mediterranean situation – reaching \$2.76 billion.

Most of the activities carried out in 2017 were related to emergency response, protection and solutions. The remaining budget went towards other activities, mainly the facilitation of voluntary repatriation, local integration and reintegration activities in countries of return. Faced with increasing needs and gaps in funding, UNHCR will continue to make difficult decisions in prioritizing life-saving activities, particularly in emergency situations, and facilitating access to durable solutions.

At the end of August 2018, the voluntary contributions earmarked for Africa amounted to \$494.4 million, representing about 18 per cent of the needs in the region.

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