

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator a. i. Ramesh Rajasingham Remarks at Stocktaking Event on the UN Pledge and the IASC Pledge

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As delivered

Greetings, all. It is a pleasure to be here at this important meeting, which aims to put our pledges for refugees to the test.

Forced displacement surpassed 80 million people last year, that's on top of COVID-19 crisis, according to UNHCR, and around a third of these displaced people were refugees. Forty per cent were children.

And as always, the vast majority – 86 per cent – are hosted by developing countries, Global South countries, that face their own challenges, including containing the impact of the pandemic.

COVID-19 added additional stresses to displaced populations as stigma and discrimination grew, lockdowns restricted mobility and legal processes took much longer.

At the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the UN Secretary-General, Mark Lowcock, pledged support to include refugees and returnees into national plans and humanitarian and development plans.

So, how are we doing and where do we need to accelerate and strengthen progress?

I will start by outlining some of the top-line activities the IASC and OCHA took to support refugees in 2020, and I will outline two areas that need more progress. In terms of the operations, the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, or the HPC, is the framework of our operations, encompassing needs analysis, response planning and resource mobilization.

This cycle includes the needs of refugees and other displaced people at every stage, as reflected in Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plans, which we also call HRPs.

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Iraq, in most humanitarian settings the Inter-Agency Standing Committee or IASC agencies set out to help these displaced groups by coordinating response plans.

For instance, in Jordan the Humanitarian Partners Forum supports joint planning on a range of issues facing refugees, such as including them in national health plans and assessing their protection needs. And funding is aligned between the Jordan Humanitarian Fund (pooled fund) and the Jordan Response Plan for refugees.

Each year the Global Humanitarian Overview, the GHO, presents a rigorously assessed and costed plan to respond to humanitarian needs, with refugee response comprising about a third of that. In 2020, refugee response accounted for \$9.2 billion of the record \$29 billion initial ask - which has increased in 2021 as well.

Addressing the humanitarian consequences of population displacement is also crucial to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds, which OCHA manages.

Last year, just under 60 per cent of the people that the CERF targeted were refugees, internally displaced people, returnees or host communities, with this proportion rising to 97 per cent in conflict settings. Meanwhile, 40 per cent of people targeted through the country based pooled funds are displaced.

The IASC also support extends to advocacy and policy, and advocates for displaced people at every opportunity.

The ERC stands up for refugees' needs and rights in Security Council and Member State briefings, and at high-level pledging events.

And the IASC also integrates refugee needs into its analysis, policies and response. In March 2020, when the UN launched the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 – the GHRP - one of the plan's strategic priorities was to protect and assist refugees, migrants, IDPs and host communities.

Under this plan, UNHCR and partners provided protection and health services to over 40 million displaced people in 61 countries.

Support included expanding gender-based violence services and maintaining pre-existing humanitarian assistance adapted for physical distancing.

Separate to the plan, agencies also collaborated with GAVI, the Gates Foundation and others to promote equitable vaccine distribution through COVAX.

And in this case, the IASC also analysed increased stigmatization of refugees and migrants, setting out the best practice for this response.

So, there has been progress since the Compact was launched. But there is always room for improvement. I will point to two particular areas, both focused on coordination.

First, we need to constantly improve coordination so that our intersectoral needs analysis and response meet both IDPs' and refugees' needs, especially in what we call 'mixed response settings'.

In Iraq, for instance, the HRP targets people in acute need including IDPs, while the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan targets refugee needs.

Because there much geographical overlap in these responses, several humanitarian coordination platforms have emerged. These models are a step in the right direction. This begs a common response analysis and common standards for all vulnerable people, whoever they may be. This will then lead to more effective coordination and what we are seeing as limited resources and funding while needs are increasing. So that gap is getting larger.

Second, we need stronger and more joined up coordination between humanitarian and development organizations and partners so that life-saving and longer-term needs are met with more sustainable responses that roll back humanitarian vulnerability and contribute to restoring dignity.

For while relief assistance for refugees is a critical first resort, it cannot be the only solution. Livelihoods, jobs, school diplomas are what every refugee needs to support herself or himself and their families.

During where I met a refugee mother of several children. She said her first ask was for security so she could return home. Her second was access to her market gardening which was her livelihood at home so she could provide a better quality life for her children. We must place the dignity of refugees at the centre of our response plans.

Thanks Gillian for this opportunity and I turn back to you.