

# Foreword

The 2004 Global Appeal provides an overview of UNHCR's operations and challenges and describes our funding requirements for the coming year.

The key challenges faced by UNHCR today are described in the "UNHCR 2004" report which I recently submitted to the General Assembly. Our focus in 2004 will be on implementing the recommendations made in that report. We will also continue with the initiatives outlined in the Framework for Durable Solutions and with Convention Plus activities aimed at developing special agreements to enhance burden-sharing and to sharpen the focus on achieving durable solutions.

Unresolved refugee situations in a number of countries continue to put enormous demands on UNHCR.

In Africa, we will focus on the repatriation of refugees to Sierra Leone, Angola and Eritrea. In addition to ongoing protection and assistance activities, we will respond to new emergencies, including the plight of some 65,000 refugees who recently fled to Chad from Sudan.

In Asia, there are also hopeful signs that UNHCR will be able to assist refugees and internally displaced people to return home in 2004. More than 2.2 million Afghan refugees have returned to their homes since December 2001, and we expect significant returns again next year. In order to find long-term solutions for the Afghan displacement problem – and particularly for the large number of Afghans who remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan – over the next two years, we will be working with Governments and other partners on concrete initiatives aimed at addressing the changing situation within the region in a comprehensive manner. Another major return operation which will demand our attention is Sri Lanka. In Nepal, we will move forward with the initiative to find solutions for over 100,000 Bhutanese people who remain in camps and to assist, as far as our mandate allows, the two concerned Governments in this regard.

For some time, UNHCR has been phasing down much of its presence in South-Eastern Europe, consolidating the network of field offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia which have played such a crucial role in the process of return and reintegration. Over one million refugees and displaced persons have returned home since the Dayton agreement in 1995. Our predominant focus will now turn to asylum-system building. Another key area which will continue to demand our active engagement is in the Northern Caucasus, where displaced Chechens in Ingushetia are being pressured to return to Chechnya.

In the case of Iraq, in 2003 we drew up plans to assist with the voluntary return and reintegration of over half a million Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as with the return of some 800,000 internally displaced people. After the 19 August bombing of UN Headquarters in Baghdad, our programme was temporarily suspended and future activities will depend on how the political and security situation evolves. Our interim priority will be to build the capacity of Iraqi authorities to address the needs of refugees, returnees and the internally displaced.

In the Americas, the humanitarian situation in Colombia remains of great concern with over two million internally displaced and an increasing number of refugees in the region. The Office will continue to play a central role in co-ordinating the UN response to the IDP situation with the aim of promoting and facilitating comprehensive responses to internal displacement.

Our Annual Programme Budget for 2004 is USD 954.9 million. This is almost USD 120 million higher than last year's Annual Programme Budget. The increase is largely attributable to the mainstreaming of the 2003 Supplementary Programmes into the Annual Programme Budget. I hope that I will be



The High Commissioner, Ruud Lubbers, at the opening of the 54th session of UNHCR's Executive Committee in September 2003, Geneva.

able to count on our friends and supporters to ensure that this budget, approved by our Executive Committee, is fully funded.

Even though the Annual Programme Budget is significantly higher than in previous years, it is worth noting that this is still a resource-based rather than a needs-based budget. Recognising this, I have urged our staff not to turn away offers of additional funds from donors for activities which are not specified in the 2004 programme. In cases where such activities are in line with our mandate and would clearly be beneficial to refugees and other persons of concern, I intend to accept such funds. Internal procedures have been adjusted for this purpose on a pilot basis for 2004.

Another important innovation is our invitation to NGO and other partners at the country level to work more closely with us in assessing needs, setting objectives and preparing budgets. We will focus on three key areas: making better use of services provided by partners in cases where they are able to carry out activities in a more cost-effective manner than UNHCR; exploring opportunities for partners currently funded by UNHCR to continue the same activities with funding from other sources; and supporting – other than financially – projects aimed at responding to unmet refugee needs not included in the UNHCR budget.

I hope this Global Appeal will contribute to a better understanding of our planning assumptions, objectives and priorities, and corresponding financial requirements.

I count on your continued generosity.

Ruud Lubbers