

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs  
11 – 13 JUNE 2013 - International Conference Center Geneva**

**REGIONAL SESSION**

***BACKGROUND PAPER***

**MENA Regional Session**

***Tuesday 11 June 2013, 14h30 – 18h30 - Room 2***

**Moderator:**

***Shaima Al Zarooni***, Chief Executive Officer, International Humanitarian City, United Arab Emirates

**Speakers:**

***Yacoub El Hillo***, Director, Bureau for MENA, UNHCR

***Khalid Al Dubai***, Managing Director, Interaction in Development Foundation, Yemen

***Mohamed Vall Issa***, President, Association pour la lutte contre la pauvreté et le sous-développement, Mauritania

**Topics for discussion:**

The number of refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region has considerably increased over the last year, mainly due to the Syrian refugee crisis as well as the conflict in Mali. Far from being stable, the region continues to experience dramatic developments which have resulted in more refugee outflows, more internal displacement, and sadly, more loss of life.

Last year marked a turning point in the crisis in Syria. By end of April 2013, over 1.4 million Syrian refugees had already been registered or received registration appointments, mainly in the neighboring countries and beyond. Equally so, the crisis had its catastrophic impact inside Syria with more than 4 million persons internally displaced and over 6 million persons affected. In some cases, Syrians had to be displaced more than once as a result of the ongoing violence spread across Syria.

On the other side of the region, the conflict in Mali forced many people to flee into neighboring countries including Mauritania. By the end of April, over 74,000 Malian refugees, among them women and children, were hosted and assisted in Mbera camp in southern Mauritania.

The region remained attractive for mixed migration movements. In 2012 alone, 107,500 new arrivals from the Horn of Africa, mainly Ethiopians, landed on Yemen's shores– a record number and a 4% increase compared with last year. Similar mixed population movements continued across the North African countries, both as destination and transit. Yemen remained a host to more than 237,000 refugees, and maintains its open-door policy towards those individuals fleeing from the Horn of Africa. Moreover, 350,000 Yemenis are internally displaced, mainly in the north of the country.

With some exceptions, refugees in MENA reside largely in urban setting. This requires adoption of different assistance strategies and methods on part of the Humanitarian community as opposed to camps situations.

The MENA session is intended to discuss the above topics with a focus on the current humanitarian emergencies, mainly the Syrian, Somali and Malian refugee crisis, mixed migration flows across the region, and the largely urban nature of the refugee situations in the region.