

BACKGROUND PAPER

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Record numbers of people have been forced to flee their homes and are displaced within and across borders as a result of persecution, violent conflict, extremism, human rights violations, disasters, as well as new and emerging “megatrends” such as climate change. An increasing percentage of displaced people are also caught in protracted refugee and internal displacement situations, with their exile lasting sometimes for several decades in the absence of solutions.

2. This year's High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges (the Dialogue) seeks to better understand the root causes of forced displacement, with a view to catalysing action to address the drivers of displacement, as well as to finding solutions for those who are displaced.

3. The broad objectives of the Dialogue are to:

- contribute to a better and more nuanced understanding of “root causes” of displacement, and their relevance to “prevention”, “protection”, and “solutions”;
- generate ideas and share good practices on the institutional contributions UNHCR and other humanitarian actors can make to address root causes; and,
- identify opportunities to address root causes more strategically, collaboratively and systematically, especially through partnerships, including through strengthened cooperation between humanitarian, protection and development actors.

II. BACKGROUND

4. As of the end of 2014, the number of people forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and persecution had risen to 59.5 million, compared to 51.2 million a year earlier, and 37.5 million a decade before. This includes 19.5 million refugees, 38.2 million internally displaced persons and 1.8 million asylum-seekers. Some 13.9 million people were newly displaced in 2014. Of the world's forcibly displaced, half are women and some 80 per cent are women, children, and youth. Almost nine out of 10 refugees (86 per cent) are hosted in developing regions. An estimated 10 million people are stateless, which in some contexts may be a cause or an effect of displacement. In the past five years, at least 15 conflicts have erupted or reignited: eight in Africa, three in the Middle East, one in Europe, and three in Asia.¹

5. At the same time, it is estimated that by the end of 2014, some 6.4 million refugees (45 per cent) were in a protracted situation, which UNHCR defines as one in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country. The average duration of the 33 protracted refugee situations involving people of concern to UNHCR is estimated to be about 25 years.² The Syria situation is poised to become not only the largest refugee and internal displacement crisis, but also the largest *protracted*

¹ UNHCR, *World at War: Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2014*, 18 June 2015, available at <http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html>.

² Ibid.

refugee and internal displacement situation of the decade. Increasing numbers of internally displaced persons are also living in protracted situations. Recent research by the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement estimates that 80 per cent of the world's internally displaced persons have been displaced for more than five years.³ According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), internally displaced persons spend on average 17 years in displacement, with protracted displacement largely linked to a failure to anchor solutions in broader development and peace-building programmes.⁴

6. The record numbers of displaced persons and increasingly protracted nature of their exile render the imperative to address the causes of displacement more urgent than ever. It has long been emphasized that it is better to “prevent” people from needing to flee by addressing the causes of potential flight before they manifest themselves, rather than responding to the consequences. In the 1980s and 1990s, discussions began more systematically on how to avert new refugee situations by addressing the drivers of displacement. UNHCR's Executive Committee referred to addressing causes in 1981,⁵ the same year the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for the Secretary-General to appoint a group of governmental experts to undertake a comprehensive review of “international cooperation to avert new flows of refugees”.⁶ The group's final report in 1986 concluded that the effectiveness of the United Nations system in averting new refugee flows was seriously diminished because States did not fully observe the principles of international law, and suggested that the General Assembly call upon Member States to honour their obligations under the United Nations Charter, to use peaceful means of resolving disputes, and to refrain from pursuing policies that generated new flows of refugees.⁷

7. In 1981, the Secretary-General appointed Prince Sadrudin Aga Khan as Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and Mass Exoduses. His findings confirmed the link between human rights violations and massive refugee outflows, and his recommendations included the establishment of humanitarian observers, an early warning system, and special representatives for humanitarian questions.⁸ In related initiatives, efforts to appoint a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights culminated in the establishment of that office in 1993, and a High Commissioner for Minorities was established at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1992, to engage in conflict prevention and early warning.⁹

8. These initiatives recognized that, where possible, the causes of displacement should be identified and addressed at their outset, but limited progress was made to “operationalize” preventive approaches. Such approaches were also criticized by some as attempts to contain displacement within countries or regions of origin, at the expense of refugee protection.¹⁰ Since flight might be the only viable option for survival, the role

³ See Ferris, E., *Ten Years After Humanitarian Reform: How Have Internally Displaced Persons Fared?*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, December 2014, p. 25, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/12/29-idp-humanitarian-reform-reports/introduction-to-final-report-idp-study-final.pdf>. See also Ferris, E., and Half, K., *Protracted Internal Displacement: Is Local Integration a Solution*, October 2011, Geneva, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/10/11-protracted-dis-ferris>.

⁴ See Norwegian Refugee Council and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Global Overview 2014: People internally displaced by conflict and violence*, May 2014, pp. 15-16, available at <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2014/201405-global-overview-2014-en.pdf>. See also Blocher, J., *A record 33.3 million displaced by conflict and violence worldwide, with Nigeria in the top 5 countries most affected*, May 2014, available at <http://www.internal-displacement.org/blog/2014/a-record-333-million-displaced-by-conflict-and-violence-worldwide-with-nigeria-in-the-top-5-countries-most-affected>.

⁵ UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 22 (XXXII) of 1981 on *Protection of Asylum-Seekers in Situations of Large-Scale Influx*.

⁶ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 36/148 of 16 December 1981 on *International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees*.

⁷ United Nations, *Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on International Co-operation to Avert New Flows of Refugees*, Note by the Secretary-General, A/41/324, 13 May 1986, pp. 16-18, as cited by Drüke, L. in *Preventive Action for Refugee Producing Situations*, 1993, pp.46-47.

⁸ United Nations, *Secretary-General's Bulletin: Office for Research and Collection of Information*, ST/SGB/225, 1 March 1987, cited in Drüke, op. cit., pp. 51-52. As a result of these recommendations, six years later, the Secretary-General set up the Office for the Research and the Collection of Information within the Secretariat to carry out newly defined tasks in the area of special political affairs.

⁹ Drüke, op. cit., pp. 12, 52-54.

¹⁰ Hathaway, J. C., *New Directions to Avoid Hard Problems: The Distortion of the Palliative Role of Refugee Protection*, 1995 *Journal of Refugee Studies* 8:3, pp. 288-300, and Scholdan, B., *Addressing the Root Cause: Relief and Development Assistance between*

of humanitarian action is not to promote or enable restrictions on such flight, but rather to advocate with others to address the root causes of displacement. “Prevention” in this sense focuses upon addressing the factors that trigger displacement, so that people are not obliged to move. “Prevention” does not mean preventing people from moving.

9. Given the magnitude and changing nature of contemporary displacement, UNHCR considers it timely to revisit these issues in today’s context and to consider how to take them forward. Key drivers of displacement include the various crises that go well beyond the remit of humanitarian and protection organizations to address. There are nevertheless contributions that humanitarian actors can make, within their respective mandates, and because of their specific areas of expertise, strong country presence, longstanding engagement in many settings, community-based approaches, well-established partnerships, and emphasis on capacity building with local and national actors. Humanitarian actors can support preventive efforts by governments and other stakeholders, such as: protecting minorities; providing access to education; resolving and preventing statelessness; promoting gender equality; building upon work to strengthen the *rule of law*; and promoting the right to work, social cohesion, peacebuilding, human rights, and rights-based approaches to development.

10. The need for early action, and the crucial role of responding early to human rights violations, is at the heart of the Secretary-General’s “Rights up Front” initiative.¹¹ The close link between prevention and protection was recognized in paragraph 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which commits to helping States build capacity to protect populations before crises and conflicts break out.¹² The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit are important opportunities to bring a stronger emphasis on the root causes of displacement within humanitarian and development agendas.

11. Against this background, this Dialogue provides an important opportunity to identify ways to bridge protection efforts and longer-term prevention and solutions through addressing the root causes of displacement. Among the key themes, three will form the heart of the discussions at this year’s Dialogue: (1) the links between conflict and displacement, (2) the role of climate change and other megatrends, and (3) the need for solutions. These themes will be further outlined in Part III below.

12. While the focus of the Dialogue is on the root causes of displacement, and the need for solutions, it is important to note a related phenomenon of concern to many States: that refugees and asylum-seekers are also increasingly *moving onward* from countries of first asylum.¹³ Nearly 800,000 people have braved dangerous crossings over land and by sea from countries of asylum to Europe this year, the majority of them from the top nine refugee-producing countries. UNHCR identified the major factors behind the recent spike in the number of Syrian refugees moving onwards to seek asylum in Europe, including notably a loss of hope of being able to return home and deteriorating living conditions in the countries where they were living. In addition to these two longer-term trends, the humanitarian funding shortfall is a continuing factor. Further, over half of Syrian children do not have access to education.¹⁴ Many refugee children and youth have told UNHCR that they moved onward from their host countries, often at substantial risk to their lives, in search of education and a more promising future. While the “root causes” of onward movements of refugees from their first countries of asylum, and the responses to these causes, may differ as compared to the drivers of initial displacement, there

Peacebuilding and Preventing Refugee Outflows, ACCORD, 2000, cited in Boswell, C., *Addressing the Causes of Migratory and Refugee Movements: the role of the European Union*, 2002, New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper No. 73, p. 1, available at <http://unhcr.org/3e03005fa.html>.

¹¹ See United Nations, *Human Rights up Front Initiative*, available at <http://www.un.org/sg/rightsupfront/>.

¹² United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/1 of 24 October 2005 on *2005 World Summit Outcome*, para. 139: “We also intend to commit ourselves, as necessary and appropriate, to helping States build capacity to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity and to assisting those which are under stress before crises and conflicts break out”.

¹³ The term “onward movement” has no legal definition and is used here in its ordinary sense, without being prescriptive or defining a particular class of people moving onward. See UNHCR, *Onward Movement of Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Discussion paper prepared for the Expert Roundtable on Onward Movement*, Graduate Institute of International Development Studies, Geneva, 1-2 October 2015, 25 September 2015, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/562f81c39.pdf>.

¹⁴ UNHCR, *Loss of hope and deepening poverty driving Syrians to seek refuge in Europe*, News Stories, 25 September 2015, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/560558b06.html>. UNHCR identified these factors driving onward movements of Syrian refugees to Europe based on monitoring and assessments, surveys, focus group discussions, and daily interactions with refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as with internally displaced people in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

will invariably be overlap. These issues will therefore also be touched on during the course of the thematic sessions that will be convened at this year's Dialogue.

III. THEMATIC SESSIONS

13. In addition to plenary sessions, the Dialogue will convene three thematic sessions, consistent with the themes identified above:

- Understanding the causes of conflict-related displacement, the potential of humanitarian action and the drivers of onward movement;
- Addressing “new” root causes: urbanization, environmental degradation, food insecurity, water scarcity, natural hazards and climate change;
- Unlocking protracted situations and finding solutions.

14. Under the guidance of co-chairs, the thematic sessions will offer an opportunity to deepen the analysis and generate fresh thinking and forward-looking recommendations. UNHCR has invited a number of government, non-governmental, UN, academic, legal and country experts to open each session with remarks to frame the discussions.

Thematic Session 1: Understanding the causes of conflict-related displacement, the potential of humanitarian action and the drivers of onward movement

15. There is a significant body of research about the factors that contribute to conflict-related displacement - in addition to “traditional” persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

16. Many of these factors are rooted in acute racial, ethnic, religious and/or cultural divisions as well as gross inequities within a country. Causes of conflict-induced displacement can, however, be hard to isolate and distinguish, and causes frequently *converge*. Conflicts can be self-perpetuating, not only causing but also exacerbating and continuing displacement.¹⁵ An expert roundtable on international protection of persons fleeing armed conflict and other situations of violence held in South Africa in 2012 concluded that “there is usually no singular explanation for a particular conflict, and that there are multiple and overlapping causes, which may change over time”. Reasons underlying armed conflict, or other situations of violence, range from political, ethnic, or religious, to the exploitation of economic resources, to the drug trade and transnational criminal activities.¹⁶ In many situations, poverty, human rights violations, sexual and gender-based violence, drought, impunity, bad governance, corruption and ethnic marginalization co-exist as *multiple drivers* of displacement. Statelessness has been a root cause of violent conflict in a number of situations, leading to massive internal and external displacement. Studies have noted that countries with the lowest development indicators tend to experience repeated cycles of violent conflicts that trigger displacement, and conflict in turn makes States and people poorer.¹⁷ A 2003 study of the causes of internal displacement in Huambo, Angola, was illustratively entitled: *Last time I fled because of war, this time because of hunger*.¹⁸

¹⁵ See Forced Migration Online, *Dynamics of internal displacement*, August 2011, available at

<http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/internal-displacement/dynamics-of-internal-displacement>.

¹⁶ UNHCR, *Summary Conclusions on International Protection of Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence*, Roundtable on International Protection of Persons Fleeing Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence, 13 and 14 September 2012, Refugee Rights Project, University of Cape Town, South Africa, 20 December 2012, p. 2, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/50d32e5e2.html>.

¹⁷ See The World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, 2011, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf.

¹⁸ Birkeland, N. M., in Shanmugaratnam, N., Lund, R., and Stølen, K., (eds.) *In the Maze of Displacement: Conflict, Migration and Change*, 2003, pp. 177-200 cited in Forced Migration Online, *Dynamics of internal displacement*, August 2011, available at <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/internal-displacement/dynamics-of-internal-displacement>.

17. To deepen understanding of inter-linked causes of violent conflict and displacement, it is timely to consider the impact of the lucrative extractive industries linked to diamond mining, logging, and increasingly, minerals and metals that are vital for the digital revolution and the global economy. The consequences of trafficking in small arms that contributes to the ready availability of arms and munitions and their use in atrocities, conflicts, and crimes is also of concern. The proliferation of small arms is a reality, for example, in the northern triangle of Central America, and is a key feature of the operations of transnational organized criminal gangs. UNHCR studies from Central America of women and children on the move found the resulting lawlessness to be among the main reasons for their flight.¹⁹

18. One principal reason behind *protracted* displacement is the multiplication and persistence of conflicts that appear to be intractable, in the absence of broad-based, determined political resolve to end them. Conflict resolution – and prevention – must therefore be given higher priority, in light of the very real threats conflicts pose to international peace and security. It is crucial to build collective capacity to find solutions to conflicts at an early stage, rather than struggling to cope with the consequences. The need to address such root causes of displacement is widely acknowledged. In relation to internally displaced persons, signatories to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) have committed to addressing root causes, especially persistent and recurrent conflicts, and to prevent arbitrary displacement.²⁰ The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement outline measures required to protect persons from being displaced in the first place.²¹ In the 2014 Brazil Declaration, Latin American and Caribbean States and Territories reaffirmed their commitment to addressing the causes that generate displacement in the region.²² Regional mechanisms to ensure the accurate and timely flow of information and analysis from the country level to global decision-makers have also been established by the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the African Union.²³ It is also widely recognized that early preventive action can address structural and operational factors that affect a State's capacity to prevent mass human rights violations leading to displacement.

19. An important aspect of prevention of conflict is strengthening the *rule of law*, the absence of which has been identified as a key driver of human rights violations and resulting displacement, and the presence of which provides the normative and institutional framework required to achieve justice and peace.²⁴ Absence of the rule of law permits armed elements to thrive with impunity. Ensuring accountability for human rights abuses becomes a core element of prevention. National judicial bodies, human rights commissions, and traditional justice mechanisms have an important role to play here. A 2013 study²⁵ found that an increased focus on *addressing long-term development problems*, such as State laws and policies that encourage political and social exclusion, weak legal systems, and poor security services, will help ameliorate some of the causes of harmful behaviour that can lead to displacement. Measures to counter extremism, extremist rhetoric, and sectarian division are equally important in this sense. Operational measures can also be taken to mitigate tensions, halt the commission of imminent or ongoing violations, ensure accountability for violations committed, and prevent further violence. Such measures include, necessarily, the development of efficient early warning, assessment,

¹⁹ UNHCR, *Children on Run: Unaccompanied children leaving Central America and Mexico and the need for international protection*, 2014, available at <http://unhcrwashington.org/children>; UNHCR, *Women on the Run: First-hand accounts of refugees fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico*, 2015, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/5630f24c6.html>.

²⁰ African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), available at <http://www.unhcr.org/4ae9bede9.html>.

²¹ United Nations, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1998, Principle 5, available at <http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/idp/gp-page>.

²² *Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action*, 3 December 2014, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5487065b4.html>.

²³ United Nations, *The role of regional and subregional arrangements in implementing the responsibility to protect*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/65/877, 28 June 2011, para. 27, available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/65/877.

²⁴ United Nations, *Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/206, 27 July 2015, para. 32, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/231/99/PDF/N1523199.pdf?OpenElement>.

²⁵ See Murray, J., and Landry, J., *Placing Protection at the Centre of Humanitarian Action: A Study on Protection Funding in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies*, Global Protection Cluster, 2013, p. 8, available at <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/protection-funding-study-final-report-1.pdf>.

and response mechanisms.²⁶ Women and girls in displacement settings have uniquely gendered experiences and requirements which need to be heard and considered in peacebuilding efforts. The role of women as actors in peacebuilding processes is therefore vital, and gender-based discrimination and violence against women in conflict, post-conflict, and transitional settings must be addressed in peace-building efforts.²⁷

Questions for consideration:

- Can a better and shared understanding of how to analyse drivers of displacement contribute to designing more effective responses?
- How can we better ensure that comprehensive monitoring and reporting contribute to a stronger evidence base for understanding the causes of displacement?
- How can we ensure that gender-based concerns are well-considered and integrated into design, planning, implementation and monitoring activities aimed at preventing displacement?
- In a number of peace processes, women have been agents of peace: how can we better tap the potential of women, including internally displaced and refugee women, as peacemakers and agents of peace?
- What are humanitarian actors already doing to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding?
- It is evident that prevention is not the sole remit of any one actor, requiring joint strategies and initiatives. How can we further cooperation and collaboration to ensure complementarity and effectiveness in these efforts?
- How does the concept of protection relate, e.g., to humanitarianism, human rights advocacy, development, promotion of rule of law, peacekeeping, migration, and labour?
- What are the best ways of responding to asylum-seekers and refugees who move onward for protection-related and other reasons since onward movement by irregular means can in turn increase exposure to violence, exploitation and other violations of rights?

Thematic Session 2: Addressing “new” root causes: urbanization, environmental degradation, food insecurity, water scarcity, natural hazards and climate change

20. States and communities are increasingly pointing to newly recognized root causes of, or changing “megatrends” in the drivers of, forced displacement. In addition to the traditional drivers of persecution, conflict, violence, extremism, and human rights violations, people are also increasingly forced to abandon their homes as a result of factors such as urbanization, environmental degradation, water scarcity, food insecurity, disasters linked to natural hazards and the adverse impacts of climate change.

21. According to the latest population statistics, over half of the world’s population now live in cities. The number is expected to rise to 66 per cent by 2030, and 80 per cent of these urban-dwellers will live in the developing world. Urbanization, as well as deterioration in the quantity and quality of water and disputes over natural resources, can combine with conflict in order to drive displacement, including by magnifying the cycle of violence, since the displaced often settle in areas where local communities are already struggling to cope. A 2009 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) study suggested that between 1990 and 2009, there had been at least 18 violent conflicts fuelled by natural resources exploitation and that natural resources-related

²⁶ United Nations, *Responsibility to protect: State responsibility and prevention*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/67/929, 9 July 2013, para. 31, available at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/399; UNHCR, *State of the World’s Refugees: The Challenge of Protection*, 1993, p. 27.

²⁷ United Nations, *Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/206, 27 July 2015, para. 52, available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/231/99/PDF/N1523199.pdf?OpenElement>.

conflicts experienced an earlier and higher probability of relapse than others.²⁸ Many of the impoverished urban areas are also poorly planned, making inhabitants more vulnerable to the impacts of natural hazards. Many of the world's largest and most densely populated urban areas are also the most likely to be affected by the impacts of climate change, notably a rise in sea levels.

22. More broadly, disasters linked to natural hazards, including the adverse impacts of climate change, are also drivers of contemporary displacement. Disaster displacement often occurs in the context of natural hazards such as earthquakes, tropical storms, drought, tsunamis, flooding, glacial lake outburst floods, and landslides. Many displaced people are located in, or originate from, climate change hotspots around the world. The impacts of disasters *exacerbate vulnerabilities*, and often lead to displacement. The fifth report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change²⁹ projects that the effects of climate change will increase the displacement of people. In addition, populations lacking the resources for voluntary migration are often more exposed to extreme weather events, particularly in low-income developing countries. According to the IDMC's 2015 Global Estimates report, "Since 2008, an average of 26.4 million people per year have been displaced from their homes by disasters brought on by natural hazards. This is equivalent to one person being displaced every second."³⁰ Unless strong climate mitigation and adaptation measures are implemented worldwide, this trend is expected to increase.³¹ Further, while most people displaced in the context of disasters, including those linked to the adverse effects of climate change, remain *within* their own countries, it is predicted that the future will see more and more people displaced *across* international borders by the effects of climate change. Already, one in four countries worldwide have either received, or refrained from returning, people fleeing disasters.

23. In many of these contexts, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men, primarily as they are more dependent for their livelihood, and those of their families, on natural resources that are threatened by the impacts of climate change. Strategies to respond to the crises caused by the effects of climate change must be gender-sensitive.³²

24. States are increasingly recognizing the imperative to address climate change from a myriad of perspectives, including that of displacement, humanitarian emergency response, protection, and even preventing statelessness. The decision of the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Cancún in 2010 recognized migration, displacement, and planned relocation as relevant issues to consider within climate change adaptation measures.³³ The Nansen Initiative on Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement (Nansen Initiative) has also played an important role in addressing gaps in the current legal, institutional, and operational frameworks for protecting those forced to flee across international borders in the context of disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change, by improving the evidence base, identifying good practices, and building consensus on key principles, all compiled in the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Contexts of Disasters and Climate Change (Protection Agenda).³⁴ As the Nansen Initiative's Protection Agenda recognizes, much can be done to manage

²⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment*, 2009, p. 5, cited in United Nations, *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace*, Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, 29 June 2015, p. 15, available at http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/07/300615_The-Challenge-of-Sustaining-Peace.pdf.

²⁹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymakers*, 2014, available at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf.

³⁰ IDMC, *Global Estimates 2015: People displaced by disasters*, July 2015, available at <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2015/global-estimates-2015-people-displaced-by-disasters/>.

³¹ IPCC, Chapter 12 *Human Security in Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014, available at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/WGIIAR5-Chap12_FINAL.pdf.

³² *Gender perspectives on climate change - Issues Paper*, Interactive expert panel on emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men, 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women 28 February 2008, available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/issuespapers/Gender%20and%20climate%20change%20paper%20final.pdf>.

³³ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *The Cancun Agreements: Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention*, Decision 1/CP.16, 10-11 December 2010, available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf#page=2>.

³⁴ The Nansen Initiative's Protection Agenda was endorsed by 110 delegations in Geneva on 13 October 2015. See further, *The Nansen Initiative on Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement*, available at <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/>.

disaster displacement risk in the country of origin through disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, development and other resilience-building measures. For example, national adaptation plans, developed in close consultation with communities at risk of displacement, provide one mechanism to address human mobility within relevant national policies and to prevent and mitigate against displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. Guidance developed recently on planned relocation highlights the need for participatory, rights-based processes, involving those being relocated and host communities, taking into consideration their specific needs.³⁵

25. The Nansen Initiative's Protection Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2015-2030, and the UNFCCC COP 21 meeting in Paris in December 2015 represent important milestones in clarifying the displacement-related implications of natural hazards, disasters and climate change, and the manner in which States can marshal international support for responses going beyond "humanitarian approaches". One of the most important lessons derived from the Nansen Initiative is that States *can* prevent and prepare for increased disaster displacement in the future when the right policies are in place.

Questions for consideration:

- How can humanitarian actors best support States in identifying people at risk of being displaced as a result of the effects of climate change and other drivers?
- Are there other "new" drivers of displacement that need to be better understood and addressed?
- How can analysis of environmental degradation, water scarcity, and food insecurity best be incorporated into efforts to understand and address the root causes of displacement?
- How can adequate protection for disaster displaced persons be built into national responses to prevent, mitigate, and respond to internal displacement, including as a result of the adverse effects of climate change?
- How can humanitarian actors leverage greater cooperation across sectors in view of the interconnectedness of the causes of displacement?
- What solutions are available to persons displaced internally and across international borders as a result of disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change?
- How can the Nansen Initiative's Protection Agenda best be followed up to identify means to protect persons displaced across borders as a result of disasters and climate change?

³⁵ Brookings, Georgetown University and UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation*, October 2015, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/562f798d9.html>.

Thematic Session 3: Unlocking protracted situations and finding solutions

26. The focus of this thematic session is on the root causes of *ongoing* displacement, including protracted situations that last for years, if not decades. In most cases, this “root cause” is the lack of availability of durable solutions to the plight of refugees and stateless persons. UNHCR is actively promoting holistic solutions strategies and is committed to pursuing multi-year approaches. The Solutions Alliance, launched in April 2014, also brings together host and donor countries, academics and civil society, United Nations humanitarian and development organizations with a commitment to finding solutions to protracted displacement situations and to start working, through a preventative approach, towards solutions from the beginning of emergencies. With respect to statelessness, UNHCR’s #IBelong campaign to end statelessness in 10 years is committed to resolving the largest, most protracted statelessness situations, a number of which have led to both internal and external displacement. The 10-point *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness* also includes measures to prevent statelessness, thereby directly addressing one key driver of future displacement.³⁶ Initiatives to grant nationality to stateless populations should be incorporated into programmes to restore peace, justice and the rule of law, including effective public administration.³⁷

27. Voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity to their countries of origin is often the preferred solution of refugees themselves. In 2014, only 126,800 refugees were able to return to their home countries, the lowest level since the early 1980s. Where conditions permit, international efforts can nonetheless assist to develop opportunities for voluntary return to countries of origin. Investments in development programmes which lead to lasting change in countries of origin can also make return possible, while promoting peaceful co-existence in post-conflict societies helps to guard against further conflict-induced displacement and to make return sustainable. In addition to ensuring that the voices of displaced communities, and women in particular, are heard in peace negotiations, other essential elements in promoting sustainable voluntary return in post-conflict contexts include securing access to justice and supporting the social and economic reintegration of demobilized armed elements. The implementation of peace education programmes in schools has also been underscored by UNHCR’s Executive Committee³⁸ and these are key components of UNHCR’s *Education Strategy, 2012-2016*.³⁹

28. In some contexts, the local integration of refugees into their host communities can offer a viable durable solution for refugees. This is a complex and gradual process which comprises distinct but related legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions. In many cases, acquiring the nationality of the country of asylum is the culmination of this process, but several host States are also exploring the provision of alternative legal status to refugees on their territory. Others have recently made important efforts to provide pathways to permanent residence and naturalization for refugees, including in the context of cessation of refugee status.

29. Resettlement for its part continues to offer refugees a future and to create protection space, including in emergency contexts, and has great potential to unlock other solutions, including local integration and voluntary repatriation. When offered in significant numbers, it is also an important expression of responsibility sharing. Further, there has recently been an emphasis on exploring complementary legal pathways for entry and stay including safe pathways to third countries. For example, labour mobility schemes, expanded opportunities for family reunification, humanitarian admission and visa programmes, and student visas and scholarships, could effectively address many of the specific needs of refugees – as has been seen in the context of the Syria crisis.⁴⁰

³⁶ UNHCR, *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-2024*, November 2014, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/global-action-plan-2014-2024/>.

³⁷ United Nations, *The United Nations and Statelessness*, Guidance Note of the Secretary-General, June 2011, available at <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4e11d5092.pdf>.

³⁸ UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 107 (LVIII) of 2007 on *Children at Risk*, para. (h); UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion No. 77 (XLVI) of 1995, *General Conclusion on International Protection*, paras. (n) and (o).

³⁹ UNHCR, *Education Strategy 2012-2016*, 2012, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/5149ba349.html>.

⁴⁰ See UNHCR, *Resettlement and Other Forms of Admission for Syrian Refugees*, updated regularly, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.html>.

30. In the absence of durable solutions, support is required to enable refugees in particular, but also internally displaced persons, to find ways and means to survive, ideally by becoming productive members of their host communities through access to livelihoods and work. Policies that enable refugees and internally displaced person to become social and economic assets are potentially beneficial to all stakeholders. Lack of such opportunities in host countries has been shown to be a driver behind many onward movements, and international efforts will increasingly need to focus on creating labour opportunities for refugees. In addition to absence of work, lack of access to services, and sometimes the establishment of parallel services, tends to reinforce the isolation and vulnerability of displaced communities.

31. Simultaneous efforts are also required to support host communities. The link between displacement and development is coming into sharper focus in recognition of the role development assistance can play to support host communities respond to the challenges of displacement, but also in enabling refugees and asylum-seekers to contribute to favourable economic and other conditions in their host countries and communities.⁴¹ In September 2015, all 193 United Nations Member States unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which makes reference to refugees and internally displaced persons, and promises “that no one will be left behind” on the road to sustainable development.⁴² Facilitating safe, orderly and responsible mobility is a key component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and requires coordinated action among States and with non-governmental stakeholders. Further, at a United Nations General Assembly high-level side event on 30 September 2015 on *Strengthening cooperation on migration and refugee movements in the perspective of the new development agenda*, at which the links between human rights, peace and security were underscored, the Secretary-General outlined eight guiding principles for addressing the current refugee crisis, including promoting non-discrimination and enhancing responsibility sharing.⁴³

32. To enhance complementarity between humanitarian and development actions in support of refugees and their host communities, UNHCR is working with the World Bank. This has resulted in a number of regional forced displacement studies and technical support to operations aimed at tackling medium to longer-term challenges facing both populations. Likewise, UNHCR has been working with the United Nations Development Programme on incorporating refugees into national development plans and with the International Trade Centre on enhancing economic opportunities for refugees. It is also working with the International Labour Organization to create labour opportunities for refugees and internally displaced persons as well as with the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, States, and private entities. The upcoming World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 provides a timely and important opportunity to promote the need to find solutions to protracted refugee situations. It should also reinforce the need to strengthen the humanitarian-development connection.

Questions for consideration:

- How can the international community make inroads into resolving protracted forced displacement situations, advancing the search for solutions and preventing situations from becoming protracted?
- What more can be done to generate the political will needed to resolve the world’s largest and most protracted situations of statelessness?
- How can humanitarian and development actors further strengthen collaboration at the outset of crises to help prevent further conflict, support host communities and pave the way for durable solutions?

⁴¹ Aleinikoff, T. A., *From Dependence to Self-Reliance: Changing the Paradigm in Protracted Refugee Situations*, Migration Policy Institute, May 2015, available at <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/dependence-self-reliance-changing-paradigm-protracted-refugee-situations>.

⁴² United Nations, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 25 September 2015, available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

⁴³ United Nations, *Secretary-General’s remarks at High-Level Meeting on Migration and Refugee Flows*, New York, 30 September 2015, available at <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=9077>.

- How can self-reliance of displaced persons and development for host communities be most effectively promoted in the longer term?
 - How can displaced communities best be included in services and rights available to citizens and permanent residents, including education, employment, and health services?
 - What needs to be done – and by whom – to increase access to complementary legal pathways for movement for those seeking protection?
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