

Foreword

Over the past few years, successful repatriation operations in Africa, the countries of former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan have reduced significantly the number of people of concern to UNHCR. Resettlement is expanding through the practice of group resettlement. We have succeeded in helping several million people begin new lives. The challenge of finding more solutions for more people, and of curtailing irregular flows and human trafficking, will remain our priority in the coming year.

This Global Appeal provides an overview of UNHCR's operations and activities for 2005.

There are an unprecedented number of repatriation operations underway in Africa. Last year, refugees from Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Burundi and Angola returned in large numbers and UNHCR started a programme to help 340,000 Liberians repatriate. However, returns must be matched by post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration in order to break the cycle of violence and make repatriation sustainable.

We will provide emergency assistance in Chad and West Darfur, where the Secretary-General has given UNHCR responsibility for the protection and voluntary return of IDPs to their areas of origin. The populations of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia all await the outcome of political negotiations, and UNHCR will lend its support to these peace efforts while assisting the victims of conflict.

UNHCR registered the one millionth returnee in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004 and we hope to consolidate this success in South-Eastern Europe. In the difficult security environment of the Northern Caucasus, UNHCR will continue to work with the Russian Federation in responding to the situation of displacement from Chechnya. The addition of new Border States to the European Union and the mixed flows of migrants and refugees to the continent underscore the need for asylum policies that are truly European in scope. We will provide assistance to this process with the aim of preserving the commitment to asylum in Europe and addressing the chain of displacement in regions of origin and transit.

Recent developments in Myanmar are providing a basis on which to plan for the eventual return of refugees in Thailand. UNHCR's involvement has expanded to include IDPs going back home to areas of potential refugee returns. We will observe the evolution of the peace process in Sri Lanka and redouble efforts to identify durable solutions for Bhutanese in camps in Nepal.

In the Americas, 2004 has brought the occasion to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, reaffirming the continued relevance of the Declaration, focusing attention on the plight of yet more displaced Colombians, and promoting resettlement in Latin America.

Afghanistan has been transformed by the return of more than 3.5 million people who have decided to make it their home again since December 2001. With the approaching expiry of agreements on voluntary return from the main refugee hosting countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, there is a need for more comprehensive solutions for Afghans still outside their country, and our dialogue with relevant Governments and other partners continues. UNHCR also stands ready to assist in the humanitarian reconstruction of Iraq when security conditions allow.

In relation to physical security, UNHCR has charted a course which will enable staff to reach people in need while minimizing risk and casualties. Steps taken in 2004 will strengthen our ability to operate in a safe way in what will remain, on average, a high-risk environment.

One of the main objectives of the Convention Plus initiative is to explore more equitable ways of sharing – not shifting – the 'burden' of asylum. The Agenda for Protection and Convention Plus are where protection and durable solutions come together for refugees, a conjunction that has already brought important progress on burden sharing. Agreement has been reached on the Multilateral Framework of Understandings on Resettlement. Our work in this area and others, targeting development aid and empowering refugees, will continue.

Our Annual Programme Budget for 2005 is USD 982 million. This figure represents no real growth; the nominal increase of 2.7 per cent over last year's Annual Programme Budget is due to anticipated inflation and currency fluctuations. We are improving financial performance and reporting through the recently implemented PeopleSoft finance module. Our HQ costs are relatively higher in 2005 than in 2004 as we prepare



Republic of Chad: The High Commissioner, Ruud Lubbers meeting Sudanese refugees from the Darfur region in camps near the Sudanese / Chad border. *UNHCR / B. Heger.*

to roll out the system to the Field, enabling more “real time” financial management and better quality programme delivery.

In 2004, thanks to generous support by donors and improved financial management, UNHCR has achieved a position of financial health and stability that it has not enjoyed in many years. We are confident that, with the support and encouragement of our donors, we can continue in this way. However, emergencies and other developments in 2004 compelled us to launch several supplementary appeals, and the funding picture, while more positive overall, remains fragile. The organization is studying the question of introducing a biennial cycle of resource allocation to achieve further budgetary stability, bearing in mind our need to maintain flexibility and the ability to respond to emergencies.

UNHCR is not alone in the humanitarian arena. We are incorporating that recognition into our funding, implementing, and operating processes in order to mobilize others and make better use of partnerships. Innovative projects will give NGOs an expanded role in our protection and programming activities this year. Practising partnerships will move UNHCR forward, and this is one way in which we can address the gap between the assessed needs of people of concern to us and the resources available to respond to these requirements. Donors will participate in this process through consultations prior to the second round of our Operations Review Board.

It is gratifying to see recent declines in the global number of refugees but more than 17 million people remain of concern to UNHCR. While we are providing assistance to over one million returnees, for millions of others, hope is still remote. At the beginning of 2004, there were 6.2 million people in 38 protracted refugee situations who had been in exile for at least five years. UNHCR is working hard to resolve many of these protracted situations. But it is a labour and resource-intensive endeavour, requiring sustained international attention and continuing donor support. The same is true of UNHCR’s advocacy efforts and its work to ensure a smooth transition from repatriation to reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction so that refugees can go home and stay home. The results show that an investment in solutions is a good investment indeed.

This Global Appeal conveys our priorities, activities and the corresponding financial requirements to provide protection and solutions to refugees and other people of concern.

We count on your continuing generosity.

Ruud Lubbers