Staff Safety and Security

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Chairperson, Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to be here again this year to provide you with an update on what UNHCR is doing with respect to the safety and security of our personnel.

Challenging Security Environments

UNHCR operates in challenging security environments. Many of our emergency operations are generated or exacerbated by conflict, and these are the areas where persons of concern need our assistance the most. UNHCR experienced 404 security incidents in 2017, an increase of 36% from the previous year. Thankfully none of these incidents proved fatal for our staff; however staff members were seriously injured during an ambush near Timbuctou, Mali, where a UNHCR vehicle was fired upon; and in Yemen a staff was badly wounded by gunfire requiring medical evacuation. Recently offices were targeted by unrest/looting in South Sudan and Ethiopia, causing UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations who were also impacted to suspend and or reduce activities. We were also fortunate that in one of the security incidents that our staff were unharmed but a UN peacekeeper providing the escort in the vehicle in front was killed during an ambush attack. UNHCR's experience is part of a wider trend of increasing risk for humanitarian aid workers; in 2017, 158 major incidents of violence against humanitarian operations occurred in 22 countries affecting 313 aid workers. While UNHCR's number of security incidents has increased, effective risk management measures have reduced the impact to personnel, offices and assets.

No staff were killed in road crashes while on duty in the past 12 months; the number of injuries sustained in road crashes also decreased slightly from the previous year.

UNHCR's Security Strategy: Strengthening a Culture of Security

The goal of UNHCR is to strengthen an culture of security based on sound risk management practices so that UNHCR is able to stay and deliver critical programmes for people in need, even when risk remains.

Chairperson, Delegates, I wish to provide you with an update on what actions UNHCR have been concretely taking with respect to implementing our action plan, Culture of Security 2017-2019, which outlines five broad categories of activities, or "Pillars" namely: **Advice and Support; the Security Workforce, Governance and Oversight; Liaison and Partnership; and Training**.

(i)   **Advice and Support**. While ultimate responsibility of safety for UNHCR personnel rests with the host government, managers are accountable for assuring adequate security measures are in place. The main purpose of UNHCR Field Security Service (FSS) is to provide managers with sound and well-reasoned technical advice and support. This includes conducting security assessment missions, deploying security personnel at the onset of emergencies and providing timely advice. A new tool has been rolled to help Field Security Advisors assess the vulnerability of premises particularly towards the threat of improvised explosive devices, while new equipment is tested to ensure its suitability. The organization retains a small stockpile of security equipment that can be rapidly deployed when needed.

(ii)   **The Security Workforce**. Providing sound advice and support requires a security workforce attuned to UNHCR's unique needs. UNHCR now has 88 international security positions and nearly 200 locally recruited security staff. Most of these positions support personnel in particularly challenging operating environments. Eighteen Field Security Advisors were recruited in 2017 and 2018 to date. The Field Security Service at Headquarters manages this workforce and provides surge capacity when needed. UNHCR seeks to attract security personnel who are technically proficient, analytic, excellent communicators, speak multiple languages who come from different regions.

(iii)   **Governance and Oversight**. UNHCR undertakes a number of activities in this regard, including meeting regularly at the senior management level to review risk management measures in countries with significant risks. An important oversight process is the annual review of compliance with required security risk management measures (MOSS). According to the most recent review, 442 of UNHCR's 447 offices, or almost 99 per cent, are compliant; representing one of the highest compliance rates in the United Nations. The remaining 5 offices, including offices recently established to respond to emerging situations, are working to achieve full compliance without delay.

(iv) **Liaison and Partnership**. For UNHCR a culture of security includes active participation in UN Security Management System, in particular with the UN Department of Safety and Security with whom we closely cooperate in security efforts. UNHCR is actively engaged in the development of policies and procedures and has led the work on Gender in Security Management producing a practical guidance for security professionals in 2018. Additionally UNHCR continues to engage and support our NGO partner organizations through providing advice and including them in training where possible.

(v) **Security Training.** UNHCR devotes considerable effort to security training, focusing specific attention on development for managers, professional security staff, and adapted training for specific situations or groups. UNHCR's Security Management Learning Programme and Security Management Exercise to equip managers and staff in the field with the tools and techniques of security risk management; For the Field Security workforce, UNHCR has revamped the Core Security Certification Programme and has continued to ensure Field Security Advisors receive professional technical training. This year the training focused on two key areas (1) Gender based threats including Sexual Harassment and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and (2) physical security measures. The Women's Security Awareness Programme has to date reached more than 400 female personnel. Finally, the Regional Centre for Emergency Response, or eCentre, continues to work to build emergency response capacity among government and non-government partners in the Asia-Pacific region, including by delivering security training for managers and personnel.

Conclusion

Security within UNHCR is part of the overall duty of care that the organization has for its personnel. As part of the holistic approach the Field Security Service works closely with other Services to implement the recommendations with respect to duty of care determined by the High Level Committee of Management that UNHCR currently leads.

The efforts described today, outline the broad activities UNHCR is undertaking to provide the highest level of safety and security for our personnel as they in turn strive to safeguard the wellbeing of refugees and other persons of concern. It requires cooperation and engagement with member states, government and local communities upon whom we rely to ensure the

safety of our personnel. In this regards, I wish to take this opportunity to sincerely thank host governments and communities for their tireless support in creating favourable security environment for UNHCR and other humanitarian actors.

Thank you.