

## MULTI-YEAR, MULTI-PARTNER PROTECTION AND SOLUTIONS STRATEGY FOR UKRAINE, 2018 - 2022

### I. Introduction

This strategy sets forth UNHCR's plans for engagement in Ukraine for a period of five years from 2018-2022. The period is synchronized with the cycle of the Government of Ukraine – United Nations Partnership Framework in recognition of the value of pursuing a joined-up approach among humanitarian and development actors in the context of persistent conflict affecting eastern Ukraine, as well as the goal of achieving protection and durable solutions for IDPs, refugees and stateless persons throughout the country.<sup>1</sup>

The strategy reflects the results of broad consultations with stakeholders. Based on an initial draft strategy, UNHCR facilitated discussion with 40 stakeholders (government, international organizations, development agencies, civil society, and donors) at a workshop in March 2017. Following production of a second draft of the strategy, UNHCR conducted a series of bilateral and small group meetings with 96 stakeholders in both Kyiv and field locations. In total, UNHCR met with 48 government entities at both central and local levels, 10 diplomatic representations, 19 civil society organizations, 18 international organizations, including development agencies, as well as IDP and refugee communities to consult on the strategy and seek partnership in its implementation.<sup>2</sup> They offered broad support for UNHCR's strategic direction, welcomed the consultations and provided useful inputs that are incorporated, wherever possible, into this final document. This strategy reflects a long-term vision and a commitment to working together to achieve its objectives.

### II. Protection and solutions context

#### Refugees and asylum-seekers

UNHCR has worked with the Ukrainian authorities for over twenty years in building its capacity to protect and assist refugees and asylum-seekers. Ukraine has asylum legislation and institutions in place; however, there are protection gaps due to challenges with implementation and funding. For example, the state authorities lack funds to recruit interpreters, and there is high turnover among RSD specialists leading to challenges in sustaining improvements in quality. Work is ongoing to improve data systems to allow for better case management.<sup>3</sup>

UNHCR has provided training and coaching to the asylum authorities over the past years in the context of a regional 'quality initiative.' Nevertheless, the government recognition rate for asylum-seekers in Ukraine was very low in 2016, just 14%, despite the fact that in 2016, persons from three conflict-affected countries--Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq--comprised 41% of asylum-seekers.

As of the end of 2016, statistics of the State Migration Service of Ukraine showed that the country hosted 3,078 recognized refugees and persons with complementary protection. During the period 2010-2015, Ukraine received 1000-1500 asylum-seekers per year; however, in 2016, the number of new asylum applications dropped to 654, and in 2017, this trend continued with just 332 asylum applicants in the first half of the year. This may be the result of low recognition rates, a change in migration routes linked to the conflict, and more intensive border controls along Ukraine's eastern border. It is not clear whether this

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<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) referred to in Ukraine as "Government of Ukraine – United Nations Partnership Framework" represents the common strategic partnership framework between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations System for the period of 2018-2022. It affirms the commitment of all partners in support of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in areas that coincide with national development priorities.

<sup>2</sup> Consultations with refugee and IDP communities were done in the context of the participatory assessment. A report dated June 2017 is available on the UNHCR Ukraine website. Since there is no stateless community as such, UNHCR reached out to them through a population survey conducted in early 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Further details about the asylum procedure are available in UNHCR's 2013 paper *on Ukraine as Country of Asylum*; many issues identified in that document must still be addressed.

reduction is of a temporary nature. For the purposes of the strategy, UNHCR will assume the number of new asylum applications will remain within the range of recent years, i.e., between 700-1500 new asylum applications per year.

The population of refugees and asylum-seekers is very diverse, including more than 60 nationalities. Among refugees and asylum-seekers, an estimated 60% are men, 25% women, 10% boys and 5% girls. Ukraine remains perceived as a transit country for both persons with international protection needs and economic migrants seeking to enter the European Union, though the eastern border accounts for only a small fraction of all irregular migration into the European Union (less than 1%).<sup>4</sup>

Despite the existence of relevant legislation and policies, durable solutions for refugees remain elusive. Only a few individuals per year opt for voluntary repatriation, and current assisted voluntary return activities in Ukraine are limited. The low recognition rate discourages many asylum-seekers from working toward integration. Persons who receive international protection in Ukraine face numerous difficulties in maintaining family ties: most countries refuse to give them visas for travel, and family reunification in Ukraine is rare. Furthermore, the growing anti-refugee sentiment in neighbouring European countries is having a spill-over effect in Ukraine. While Ukraine has a national plan on integration of refugees for the period 2012-2020, this plan has had limited impact thus far due to insufficient support for a whole-of-government approach, inadequate funding and the multiple competing priorities facing the state since 2014.<sup>5</sup> The state does not provide language courses for refugees, or tailored assistance to help them access employment. Due to lack of local integration prospects, resettlement needs are increasing; however, in 2017, the resettlement target for Ukraine is 50 individuals. This number could reduce even further depending on the policies of resettlement countries and can be envisaged only as a tool for persons facing heightened protection risks and vulnerabilities that cannot be addressed in Ukraine.

#### Internally displaced persons, persons at risk of displacement and returnees

As of 7 August 2017, the Ministry of Social Policy has registered 1,586,439 IDPs.<sup>6</sup> Of these, it is estimated that between 800,000 to 1 million IDPs reside more permanently in government-controlled areas (GCA).<sup>7</sup> Sources provide varying information about the age and gender breakdown of the IDP population.<sup>8</sup> While sources vary in their estimates, it is clear that a majority of the IDP population is female, and includes a large number of older persons.

Most IDPs were displaced from the non-government-controlled areas (NGCA) of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts during 2014 and early 2015 as a result of armed conflict. Among IDPs registered with the Ministry of Social Policy, 31,000 of the total are from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.<sup>9</sup> This includes a significant number from the Crimean Tatar community.

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<sup>4</sup> Frontex, *Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Network Quarterly*, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Available in English at the UNHCR Ukraine website.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.msp.gov.ua/news/13732.html>

<sup>7</sup> The estimate differs from the official data for two main reasons: (i) State policy requires persons from NGCA to register as IDPs in order to receive pensions and social benefits, creating an incentive for many people to register as IDPs though they are not in fact displaced; and (ii) If IDPs do not claim state benefits, the authorities do not update or verify information about whether they continue to remain displaced, meaning that the registration data is outdated. The estimate comes from the 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview, November 2016.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the Ministry of Social Policy reports that 51% of IDPs are pensioners, 15% are children and 52% are women (age breakdown is based on data of Ministry of Social Policy as of 03 August 2017). One survey shows that 57% of IDPs are female; 27% are children; 17% are older persons (60+) with an average size of household of 2.73 persons (IOM, *National Monitoring System - June 2017*). Another survey shows that 70% of IDPs are female; 20% of IDPs are children; 18% are above 60 with an average size of household of 2.5 persons (World Bank, *Conflict In Ukraine, Socio-Economic Impacts of Internal Displacement and Veteran Return Summary Report*, May 2017). The Ministry of Social Policy reports that 4% of IDPs have disabilities; survey data shows that 8% of IDP households report having at least one person with disability.

<sup>9</sup> "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" (A/RES/68/262)

Furthermore, it is estimated that 23,000 persons have been displaced within the NGCA of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, of whom nearly 6,000 live in over sixty collective centers.<sup>10</sup>

Having been displaced for more than three years, IDPs in Ukraine need to find longer-term solutions to their displacement. Less than 1% express an intention to return to their homes in the near future, while 62% say they may return in the future or after the conflict; 25% do not intend to return home at all.<sup>11</sup> While 93% of IDPs mentioned that they feel fully or partially integrated in their communities, they also highlight barriers to complete integration.<sup>12</sup> These challenges to integration include:

- **Affordable and sustainable housing:** Only 2% of IDPs reside in housing they own and 23% reside with relatives and host families. Almost two-thirds of IDPs rent housing, and the high cost of rent is a main concern for IDPs.<sup>13</sup> The cost of utilities, especially for heating, has risen considerably. Queues for social housing were long even before the conflict, and IDPs are not eligible for social housing in areas where they lack residence registration. Some 6,000 IDPs live in 111 collective centers all across government-controlled areas of Ukraine with different types of ownership. Few plans are in place for helping these families to relocate to more stable and suitable housing.<sup>14</sup>
- **Employment:** Only 46% of IDPs are employed with unemployment disproportionately affecting women; however, employment rates and income levels have risen gradually over time.<sup>15</sup> Many working IDPs have re-entered the same fields and professions, yet permanent and full-time employment is more elusive and less lucrative than it was before displacement. Nationwide, the unemployment rate was 9.9% in the first three quarters of 2016.<sup>16</sup>
- **Discrimination:** Survey data suggests that some 10% of IDPs experience discrimination, mainly in the areas of housing and employment.<sup>17</sup> Discrimination occurs for various reasons: the system of residence registration creates barriers to access various rights and services; landlords and employers may consider IDPs as temporary residents and therefore less reliable; and negative social stereotypes and political undercurrents also contribute to discriminatory attitudes.
- **Legal and administrative barriers:** IDPs face difficulty in obtaining residence registration at their new place of residence because landlords generally do not issue formal rental contracts allowing people to prove their place of residence. Since IDPs lack residence registration in the locality where they now live, they are not eligible to vote in local elections. Some face difficulties in exercising economic rights, especially access to banking and loans. If they acquire residence registration in their new communities and relinquish their IDP certificates, some may be unable to access their pensions and social benefits due to regulatory and administrative inconsistencies.

In addition to its focus on IDPs throughout the country, UNHCR addresses the needs of the conflict-affected population living within twenty kilometers of the 500 kilometer-long line of contact. This conflict-affected population includes IDPs, returnees and persons at risk of displacement. Despite the dangers, some 800,000

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<sup>10</sup> These IDPs are not registered by the Ukrainian authorities.

<sup>11</sup> The remaining 13% state that the question about future intentions is 'difficult to answer.'

<sup>12</sup> IOM, NMS – June 2017

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/cc\\_factsheet\\_june2017\\_final\\_eng.pdf](https://www.sheltercluster.org/sites/default/files/docs/cc_factsheet_june2017_final_eng.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> IOM, NMS – June 2017. According to this survey, 61% of IDPs were employed before displacement. Employment rates for IDPs have risen from 35% (March-June 2016), to 41% (March 2017) to 46% (June 2017). Average monthly income per person has risen from 1,420 UAH (March-June 2016) to 1,991 UAH (March 2017) to 2,017 UAH (June 2017). The percentage of person reporting that they have to limit expenses even for food has fallen from 38% (March-June 2016) to 23% (March 2017) to 15% (June 2017).

<sup>16</sup> World Bank, recent economic development overview, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/ukraine/overview#3>

<sup>17</sup> IOM, NMS – June 2017

persons live in this area, within twenty kilometers of the line of contact on both the GCA and NGCA sides.<sup>18</sup> Older persons have been more likely to remain in these areas, while young adults have been more likely to leave. According to a UNICEF study, on the government-controlled side alone, there are over 54,000 children living along the contact line.<sup>19</sup>

In this area, humanitarian access is limited due to insecurity and restrictions, particularly in NGCA. Violations of the ceasefire are frequent; they cause casualties and damage to housing and civilian infrastructure. There is a large military presence in civilian areas, leading to multiple protection risks, e.g., military occupation of civilian housing, IHL violations, SGBV risks.<sup>20</sup> Local economies have suffered because of insecurity, displacement, interruption of markets in the region, economic blockade, as well as disruption of transportation services, as a result of which some settlements have become completely isolated. Persons living along the line of contact are at risk of harm or displacement should fighting intensify, especially if shelling damages critical infrastructure, such as water or electricity systems. Even though the conflict has been going on for more than three years, with the escalation of hostilities and increase in the number of civilian casualties by 14% since 2016, UNHCR and other actors continue to respond to new emergency humanitarian needs along both sides of the line of contact.<sup>21</sup>

An estimated 2.9 mn persons live in the NGCA.<sup>22</sup> Humanitarian needs are growing there.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the negative economic effects of the conflict, they face difficulty in accessing government services (e.g., documentation) and purchasing goods (including food and medication) because there are only five checkpoints linking NGCA and GCA. The checkpoints are also critical for maintaining family ties. The checkpoints process very large numbers of crossings--1.2 mn in August 2017—indicating the ongoing importance of ties. Furthermore, in 2016, more than 407,000 persons living in NGCA were deprived of their Ukrainian pensions because government policy links pensions to IDP registration. Persons who reside in NGCA are not eligible to receive their pensions; they can receive their pensions only if they leave NGCA, register as an IDP and actually reside in GCA.

UNHCR engages with the population along the contact line and in NGCA for two reasons. First, UNHCR works across the entire spectrum of forced displacement with this population. The population includes: (i) IDPs who have been displaced short distances within their own communities and hope to return home as soon as there is greater safety; (ii) returnees who have come back despite the dangers, often because they have run out of money to pay for housing; and (iii) many people who have no resources to move, steadfastly refuse to leave because they are attached to their homes and communities, as well as those who simply cannot conceive of how to start a new life elsewhere. Given the diverse levels of risk in communities along this line, a nuanced approach is needed. In areas where the armed conflict is more intense, people need alternatives so they can consider dignified, voluntary relocation to safer areas. In other areas, people want to move back into newly repaired homes and rebuild their communities. Second, with its leading role on protection and shelter, UNHCR contributes to the broader humanitarian response within the framework of the IASC for the entire crisis-affected population. In the assessment of the Humanitarian Country Team, persons living along the contact line and in NGCA are affected most deeply by the crisis.<sup>24</sup> Within the crisis-affected population, the

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<sup>18</sup> 2016 Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF, *The Children of the Contact Line in East Ukraine*, June 2017

<sup>20</sup> On SGBV risks, see *ibid.*, p. 10; on HLP issues, see NRC, *Voices from the East: Challenges in Registration, Documentation, Property and Housing Rights of People Affected by Conflict in Eastern Ukraine* (2016).

<sup>21</sup> OHCHR, *Conflict-related civilian casualties in Ukraine (non-paper)* dated 10 September 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> A *Joint Food Security Assessment* by the Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster (dated September 2017) found increased levels of food insecurity in NGCA: “[A]s many as 26% (up from 13%1) or up to 800,000 people in Donetska and Luhanska NGCA were found to be severely or moderately food insecure with 5,2% (up from 1.7%) or 150,000 people among those being severely food insecure.”

<sup>24</sup> According to the *Internal Guidance Note on Protection Leadership in Complex Emergencies* (April 2016), “In its cluster leadership role, UNHCR actively partakes in all aspects of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle [HPC], contributing alongside its partners to an

inter-agency humanitarian response targets by sector those persons facing the most detrimental impact of the conflict, with consideration to the differential impact on persons depending on their age, gender and other characteristics.

UNHCR also addresses the needs of returnees both in GCA and NGCA. They have returned home from either within Ukraine or abroad. Some return to homes damaged by the conflict and need assistance to repair their homes. OCHA estimates that 200,000 persons have returned to NGCA.<sup>25</sup> Survey data shows that nearly half of returnees to NGCA are persons over the age of 60. Among surveyed returnees to NGCA, 73% reported that they returned because they owned property in NGCA and thus did not have to pay for housing.<sup>26</sup> Survey data suggests that, while returns from GCA are likely to be limited in the near future, they may increase if armed conflict subsides. Another survey has reported that over 80% of Ukrainians displaced to the Russian Federation plan to remain there.<sup>27</sup> Thus, only limited returns to NGCA are projected.

### Stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness

UNHCR worked extensively on prevention and reduction of statelessness in Ukraine starting in the 1990s and through 2013 to support formerly deported persons returning to Ukraine so that they did not become stateless in the process of relinquishing their previous citizenship and acquiring Ukrainian citizenship. This work was focused on groups returning to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

Ukraine acceded to the 1954 and 1961 statelessness conventions in 2013. The authorities have not yet adopted legislation to establish a procedure for determining whether an individual is stateless or entitled to Ukrainian citizenship; therefore, the registered number of stateless persons (5,363 at the end of 2016) is considered to significantly under-estimate the actual population of stateless persons in Ukraine.<sup>28</sup> Ethnic minorities, such as the Roma, are at heightened risk of statelessness because they may face discrimination, lack birth registration or other identity documents, and/or have ties to multiple post-Soviet countries. Other groups of people—such as homeless persons, older persons holding Soviet passports (particularly in rural areas), and persons released from penitentiaries—frequently lack identity documentation and face risks of statelessness. Without identity documents, these persons cannot exercise political, civil, social and economic rights. They are marginalized; they cannot move freely and face risks of administrative fines and detention related to irregular stay in Ukraine.

Some residents of NGCA face challenges in obtaining proper identity and civil status documentation, such as birth certificates. For example, to obtain birth certification for their new-born children, parents must come to GCA and apply for birth certification through a three-step procedure that involves a visit to the civil registration office, an accelerated judicial proceeding and then another visit to the civil registration office to obtain the certificate. The fees and indirect costs associated with travel, as well as stay in GCA, are burdensome for poor families. In addition, those who got their ID cards lost due to the armed conflict often have difficulties to enter GCA to obtain new documents.

### Operational responses within distinct geographical zones

UNHCR plans to work toward protection and solutions in three distinct geographic zones within Ukraine:

**Zone I – the line of contact:** This part of the country—defined generally as twenty kilometers on either side of the contact line—continues to be affected by armed conflict. The Minsk Agreements, which outline the basis for peaceful settlement of the conflict, remain unimplemented. As long as the armed conflict continues, along with its consequences of civilian casualties, damage to housing and critical infrastructure,

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analysis of protection risks for *the entire crisis-affected population* and an effective operational response to those risks” (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> 2017 Ukraine HRP.

<sup>26</sup> IOM, NMS – June 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Sasse, Gwendolyn: The Displaced Ukrainians. “Who are they, and what do they think?” ZOiS Report 1/2017.

<sup>28</sup>The last census was conducted in 2001. In it 83,000 persons referred to themselves as stateless.

contamination of mines/UXOs, significant restrictions on the freedom of movement and disruption to normal life, people living along both sides of the line of contact will have emergency humanitarian needs, especially for shelter repairs, NFIs, protection, health, heating and water. While many prefer to remain in their homes, regardless of the ongoing conflict, those most at risk from the conflict must be offered reasonable alternatives so that they can live in greater safety.

The main protection needs in zone I relate to physical protection from the effects of armed conflict, access to social and economic rights, documentation, HLP rights, as well as SGBV and child protection. The shelter needs are large. During the most violent phase of the conflict in 2014-2015, the estimated number of damaged houses in GCA is 25,000 and at least 22,000 houses in NGCA.<sup>29</sup> The conflict has continued to cause damage to housing in 2016-2017. The Shelter Cluster estimates that a minimum of 3,500 to 4,500 households continue to have humanitarian shelter needs in GCA plus a backlog of at least 15,000 households in NGCA. Due to ongoing armed conflict, 100-200 houses per month experience new damage on both sides of the contact line.

Furthermore, the conflict-affected region has a fragile water and electricity system, which keeps deteriorating. It experiences extreme temperatures in both summer and winter; and it is economically dominated by heavy industry and coal mining. Taken together, these factors mean a significant risk for future humanitarian emergencies and displacement linked to armed conflict, environmental hazards,<sup>30</sup> or damage to critical water systems; emergencies could happen in searing summer or freezing winter temperatures. While the authorities lead the response to these needs, they experience shortfalls in resources for responding to humanitarian emergencies and in coordinating with other actors. UNHCR will continue to support the wider humanitarian response in eastern Ukraine in the areas of protection and emergency shelter/NFIs.

**Zone II – NGCA:** The operational context in the NGCA is distinctive, involving restrictions on humanitarian access, logistical challenges and uncertainty. In line with the humanitarian principles, UNHCR maintains its presence in the NGCA to deliver assistance in response to humanitarian needs.

The actions of the Government of Ukraine are critical for protecting the rights of persons in NGCA. Under international law, Ukraine has an obligation to take all possible measures to protect the human rights of citizens who live in areas that are not under the state's control. Ukraine can take various steps to improve protection of persons living in NGCA, such as simplifying access to documentation and pensions and easing people's movements through checkpoints along the line of contact.

In 2016-2017, various policies have contributed to a greater de-linking of the territories in terms of social and economic ties. Maintaining these ties would sustain the basis for future reconciliation. Better protection of the rights of citizens living in NGCA would strengthen social ties and cohesion in support of peace-building efforts, which would prevent further displacement.

**Zone III – Rest of Ukraine:** In the rest of Ukraine, the priority is integration. As the conflict continues, IDPs need to be able to integrate legally, economically, socially and politically so that they do not experience protracted displacement. This shall be without prejudice to their right to return to their homes voluntarily, especially as conditions evolve. Integration of refugees and protection and acquisition of nationality for stateless persons is also critical. The improved integration of refugees would build the authorities' confidence in the country's asylum system and lead to fairer recognition rates. After being identified through outreach

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<sup>29</sup> In absence of consistent, systematic and accessible records for NGCA, these figures are only a projection.

<sup>30</sup> A recent mission report by environmental experts, commissioned by SDC and OCHA, found that 'the additional risk of incident, impacting severely the environment and the surrounding population, added by the conflict to the pre-existing environmental situation should not be seen as high, but rather low to moderate...' See mission report v.1 dated 31 July 2017.

and properly documented, stateless persons would be able to exercise their rights, including their right to a nationality.

In many respects, conditions in Ukraine are favorable for integration. In terms of legal framework, Ukraine has acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the two statelessness conventions, as well as relevant international and European human rights conventions. It has adopted national legislation on asylum and internal displacement broadly consistent with international standards. Ukraine has adopted a policy framework, including national policies on reintegration of IDPs, integration of refugees, as well as a national plan of action on human rights.<sup>31</sup> In 2016, it established the Ministry for the Temporary Occupied Territories and IDPs, and in 2017 adopted a plan of action on the non-government controlled areas.<sup>32</sup> However, the state has not allocated sufficient resources for implementation of these policies.

Economically, though Ukraine experienced a sharp economic downturn in 2014-2015, it is recovering modestly with a growth rate of 2.3% in 2016. Ukraine is a lower middle-income country with a social welfare system. The GDP per capita for 2016 is USD 2,185, closely akin to countries such as Vietnam, Nigeria, Nicaragua and Uzbekistan. Poverty increased significantly in 2015, but moderated slightly in 2016, due to lower inflation and the resumption of modest economic growth.<sup>33</sup>

Ukraine has a strong and active civil society, which has been instrumental in assisting IDPs, stateless persons and refugees, and advocating for their protection. Nevertheless, Ukraine's legal and administrative system creates barriers that prevent IDPs and residents of NGCA and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea from fully exercising their rights as Ukrainian citizens. The list of such barriers is long and complex, including: restrictions on access to pensions and social benefits; challenges in acquiring personal documentation and registering civil acts like birth, marriage and death; and multiple housing, land and property issues. Refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons also encounter multiple administrative barriers to the exercise of their rights, creating a high demand for legal services. Discrimination is a cross-cutting concern.

### III. Vision

UNHCR's vision for Ukraine over the next five years, is that through advocacy and implementation of activities outlined below in the section IV on 'strategic objectives and areas of intervention' and through continued engagement with relevant partners, the following outcomes will be achieved:

In **Zone I**, provision of emergency humanitarian assistance along both sides of the line of contact will be made predictable, swift, targeted and well-coordinated. In the Government Controlled side of the line of contact, , the state will be able to coordinate the humanitarian response; national NGOs and community-based organizations will have increased their capacities to contribute to the response. In the non-government controlled side of the line of contact, UNHCR will adjust its contributions in the areas of protection and shelter/non-food items, in terms of coordination and delivery, depending on how the situation would evolve.

In **Zone II**, given the inherent unpredictability of the situation in the NGCA, in the absence of a political solution, the humanitarian needs of IDPs, returnees and other conflict-affected persons will continue to be addressed within an inter-agency context, with UNHCR defining its role in terms of shelter/emergency NFIs and protection. Further displacement will have been prevented, through promoting freedom of movement and facilitated access to socio-economic rights of Ukrainian citizens living in NGCA.

In **Zone III**, national actors will have assumed their responsibilities in delivering protection to IDPs and preventing, responding to and resolving internal displacement with increasing support from development

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<sup>31</sup> *National Comprehensive Programme of Social Adaptation and Reintegration of IDPs.*

<sup>32</sup> *Plan of Action regarding Implementation of Internal Policy towards Some Regions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts where State Authorities of Ukraine Temporarily Do Not Perform Their Functions.*

<sup>33</sup> World Bank: list of economies, June 2017, and Ukraine economic update April 2017.

actors. UNHCR will have assumed a role focused on advocacy and capacity-building of national actors. UNHCR will also maintain a monitoring role and fill gaps in providing legal assistance as required. UNHCR will have facilitated:

- Inclusion of IDPs in development processes.
- Implementation of a legal and administrative framework ensuring that internally displaced persons can fully exercise all their rights as Ukrainian citizens without any discrimination on the basis of their place of origin or the fact of their displacement.
- Creation of opportunities for durable solutions. IDPs will have been able to make voluntary and informed choices about whether to return or to integrate in their new place of residence. Those opting for integration will enjoy the full range of human rights in socially cohesive communities. The most vulnerable will be supported in finding affordable housing.
- Ensuring sufficient capacities for local and national governments. UNHCR and its partners will have, built the capacity of national actors (both governmental and non-governmental), promoted state responsibility, and disengaged responsibly, while IDPs will enjoy their full rights as citizens.
- Withdrawal from the cluster coordination system in favour of a national system.

On a global level, the Ukrainian experience will be used to pilot a disengagement process in real-time in the Government-controlled areas to derive lessons learned and provide corporate-wide guidance [e.g. a checklist and benchmarks to measure progress in implementing a responsible disengagement strategy].

The asylum procedure will have become more fair and effective, resulting in an improved rate of refugee recognition. More refugees will be able to integrate locally, as communities mobilize, employment opportunities improve, and public services become more accessible. Discrimination will become less prevalent. Refugees will benefit from reforms intended to support IDPs, wherever possible.

Outreach will have resulted into identification of persons at risk of statelessness. An increasing number of persons will have obtained access to nationality or to lawful residence and documentation through a fair and effective procedure, including documentation that will ensure enjoyment of social and economic rights. With increasing levels of birth documentation in NGCA, statelessness will have been prevented.

#### **IV. Strategic objectives and areas of intervention**

Multiple actors, including the Government of Ukraine, the United Nations and both national and international civil society organizations, contribute to the realization of this vision. UNHCR defines its strategic objectives based on the following factors:

- UNHCR's mandate for protection and solutions for refugees and stateless persons;
- UNHCR's key parameters of its operational engagement with IDPs, as established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. This includes UNHCR's responsibilities as the lead agency in the areas of protection and emergency shelter/NFIs for IDPs, for which UNHCR acts as 'provider of last resort';<sup>34</sup>
- UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Policy, "Do no harm" principle, beneficiary dignity and choice as well as results-based management;
- UNHCR's Global Strategic Directions for 2017-2021;<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Operational Guidance on the Concept of "Provider of Last Resort"; and UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement Provisional Guidance. The Shelter Cluster, in its note entitled *Scope of Country-Level Shelter Clusters*, explains as follows: "Whilst the shelter clusters' role and responsibilities range from emergency to longer-term shelter, the concept of 'provider of last resort' will only apply to meeting emergency needs and not to the provision of longer term shelter or housing or longer term settlement planning."

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR's Global Strategic Directions for 2017-2021.



- The Commitment to Action signed by UNHCR and other UN entities at the World Humanitarian Summit, which particularly emphasizes the importance of joined-up humanitarian and development work to deliver better outcomes over time;<sup>36</sup>
- UNHCR's strategic objectives should complement the role of other actors and take into consideration UNHCR's comparative advantage in contributing to the overall vision. UNHCR will focus its action on areas where it has strengths;
- UNHCR's strategic objectives should contribute to the implementation of national policy and development frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals framed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2018-2022.

**Prioritization:** Given that funding for UNHCR's work in Ukraine is expected to reduce over the period 2018-2022, and in order to prepare for responsible disengagement, UNHCR will prioritize advocacy, support to capacities of national and local institutions, and community-based interventions, while delivering individual humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable primarily in zone I where the needs are greatest. Individual level assistance will target those with specific needs, including minorities, older persons at risk, single female-headed households, persons with disabilities, survivors of SGBV, children at risk and persons with protection needs (including LGBTI persons).

Certain protection problems affect all the populations of concern to UNHCR in Ukraine. These include discrimination, as well as legal and administrative barriers to the exercise of rights. UNHCR will give priority to these issues and seek to integrate its programmatic interventions in order to achieve greater synergy and efficiency.<sup>37</sup> The main cross-cutting interventions include: anti-discrimination programs; legal assistance; legislative advocacy; and capacity support to national NGOs and government partners. Legal assistance will remain an important intervention for all populations of concern for the duration of this strategy, since it provides the basis for accessing national protection systems and the evidence base for advocacy, including through judicial interventions.

While the number of refugees is small, given its mandate for international protection and solutions for refugees, UNHCR will continue to devote resources to the asylum system and local integration of refugees in Ukraine. For similar reasons, UNHCR will also prioritize the prevention and reduction of statelessness.

### **Strategic Objective #1: Asylum seekers, Refugees and Stateless**

By 2022, asylum-seekers will have access to increasingly fair and effective procedures. The Government of Ukraine and national civil society organizations will facilitate the local integration of increasing numbers of refugees, while UNHCR will provide voluntary repatriation and resettlement for small numbers. Undocumented persons will have access to fair and effective procedures to confirm their citizenship or statelessness. To achieve this, the following programmatic priorities will be pursued:

#### **Refugees and asylum-seekers**

- Strengthen the capacity of the State Migration Service and judiciary through training, coaching, quality assurance measures and regular exchange of information to strengthen the fairness and effectiveness of refugee status determination procedures, including through regional cooperation;
- Cooperate closely with the State Border Guard Service and other relevant law-enforcement agencies such as the State Security Service, including through monitoring, regular communication, training events and regional round tables, regarding access of asylum-seekers to the territory of Ukraine

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<sup>36</sup> Commitment to Action: Transcending humanitarian development divides, Changing people's lives: From Delivering Aid to Ending Need (2016).

<sup>37</sup> Integration of programming across populations of concern is one of the recommendations in the *Ukraine Country Programme Evaluation* (August 2017).

(particularly at international airports) and protection of refugees and asylum-seekers in the context of mixed migration;

- Monitor the situation of asylum-seekers in immigration detention and provide them with legal assistance; advocate for alternatives to immigration detention;
- Advocate for amendments to domestic legislation on asylum and integration which are in line with international and European standards in the field of refugee protection; cooperate closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in developing draft legislative and regulatory documents;
- Provide free legal aid through national NGOs to refugees and asylum-seekers regarding the asylum procedure; family reunification, civil, social and economic rights; and access to public services; support Free Legal Aid Centres in progressively developing their capacity to handle asylum cases;
- Work with national and local authorities, civil society organizations and refugees to develop and implement an updated strategy on refugee integration with a focus on livelihoods, employing a community-based approach and addressing the specific needs of refugee women. While continuing to advocate for inclusion of refugees into livelihoods programs run by other actors, UNHCR will work on livelihoods for refugees in order to address their specific needs. No other actor is ready to play this role;
- Provide for the basic needs of the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers, with a particular focus on women at risk, unaccompanied and separated children, persons with disabilities and persons with specific protection needs (including LGBTI persons), using a cash-based intervention where possible; support and facilitate assisted voluntary return programmes;
- Use resettlement as a protection tool for persons facing serious risks that cannot be addressed effectively in Ukraine, prioritizing women at risk and targeting fairly a small expected number of resettlement slots;
- Strengthen the capacity of national NGOs to advocate for, protect and assist refugees;
- Develop public information campaigns and communication strategies to counter the growing anti-refugee sentiment.

#### **Stateless persons**

- In the context of UNHCR's Global Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, advocate for facilitated procedures granting or confirming Ukrainian nationality for those who are entitled to it and for the issuance of related documents;
- Support the authorities in developing a procedure for determining the status of stateless persons, and advocate for other legislative amendments to improve the protection of stateless persons in line with international standards;
- Conduct outreach to communities with identified risks of statelessness, with a particular focus on the Roma community;
- Provide legal aid to stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness; provide individual assistance to support them in obtaining documentation needed to confirm their citizenship or status as a stateless person;
- Strengthen the capacity of government authorities (State Migration Service, judiciary, Free Legal Aid Centers) to handle legal cases relating to statelessness;
- Support measures that simplify birth registration for children born in NGCA, as well as children born of asylum-seekers, in cooperation with UNICEF and other stakeholders.

#### **Strategic Objective #2: IDPs and persons at risk of displacement along the line of contact (Zone 1)**

By 2022, the most critical humanitarian and protection needs of IDPs and persons at risk of displacement will be met through an inter-agency response along the line of contact, with UNHCR responding in the areas of protection and emergency shelter/NFIs and meeting critical needs in partnership with government, NGOs and communities.

The scope of interventions will differ in NGCA and GCA depending on humanitarian access, identified needs and activities conducted by other actors. In GCA, UNHCR will advocate for and support a Government-led mechanism to ensure smooth coordination of the response. In NGCA, UNHCR will continue to support local NGOs and community groups to respond to humanitarian and protection needs. Throughout the response, particular attention will be given to minorities, older persons (who are disproportionately women), as well as persons with disabilities, since their needs receive less attention from other protection actors. To achieve this, the following programmatic priorities will be pursued:

### Protection

- Conduct protection monitoring; provide protection counseling, legal assistance and representation; support the development of systematic referral mechanisms among government and NGO partners and also to possible other UN agencies;
- Support community-based groups that build on the education, skills, and capacities of affected populations to organize emergency response and protect themselves;
- Build capacity of local protection actors, such as community centers and providers of social and administrative services, to deliver support to IDPs and the affected population in both rural and urban areas, with a focus on persons with specific needs (especially minorities, older persons and persons with disabilities);
- Mobilize community participation in SGBV prevention and response; provide legal aid to survivors as UNHCR's contribution to the multi-sectoral SGBV response led by UNFPA;
- Provide individual protection assistance to IDPs with specific needs (e.g., minorities, older persons at risk, persons with disabilities, single female-headed households, survivors of SGBV, children at risk, LGBTI persons), using a cash-based modality wherever possible;
- Advocate for the adoption and implementation of laws and policies that protect the rights of persons living in areas along the line of contact, with particular attention to: security; freedom of movement; housing, land and property rights; and access to social and economic rights;
- Conduct dialogue for strengthening humanitarian access in NGCA;
- Support measures that ease movement across and along the line of contact;
- Provide protection by presence through a robust field presence along the line of contact;
- Provide leadership of the Protection Cluster while implementing a transition plan to hand over the coordination role to national and local structures progressively in 2019.

### Shelter/NFI

- Invest in building the preparedness and response capacity of national actors, in recognition of their role as first, local-level responders, and support their leadership in coordination mechanisms;
- Deliver emergency shelter/NFI support to conflict-affected persons, IDPs, persons at risk of displacement and returnees;
- Conduct light, medium, heavy repairs and reconstruction of damaged housing, in line with Shelter Cluster guidelines to cover the existing humanitarian shelter needs (in cooperation with other actors) by end of 2018 for GCA and another 4-5 years minimum for NGCA, depending on access and evolution of the conflict; thereafter, maintain a capacity to respond flexibly to new damage. UNHCR will give particular attention to shelter interventions in NGCA, since needs are high and fewer organizations provide assistance there. Shelter assistance will be targeted to avoid areas subject to frequent shelling;
- Support government programs to offer alternative housing to households living in dangerous areas along the line of contact, ensuring that any relocation programs respect the principles of voluntariness and informed consent and include procedural safeguards and remedies, provision of adequate housing and compensation;
- Integrate protection (including housing, land and property rights) into all shelter activities;
- Improve the quality of social infrastructure along the line of contact through community support projects implemented in cooperation with local actors and using a community-based approach;
- Winterization activities for 2018-2022 will not be in UNHCR's prioritized plan, but could be implemented if there are critical needs and pending availability of donor funds;

- Collect and analyze information about damage to housing, including in NGCA, to facilitate better planning of the humanitarian response;
- Provide leadership of the Shelter Cluster while implementing a transition plan to hand over the coordination role to government structures progressively in 2018; UNHCR will continue to support sectoral coordination at field level, as needed.

### **Strategic Objective #3: IDPs, returnees, and population at risk of displacement in Non-Government Controlled Area (zone 2)**

By 2022, IDPs, returnees, and population at risk of displacement in NGCA will have received the shelter/NFI and protection interventions required to meet their needs, while peacebuilding initiatives will have prevented the aggravation of conditions causing displacement or preventing returns.

Given the inherent unpredictability of the situation in the NGCA, in the absence of political solution, the level of UNHCR's engagement will be determined by the evolving context and reviewed on a bi-annual basis. Under the existing circumstances, during the initial biennium 2018-2019, the following programmatic priorities will be pursued:

#### **Protection**

- Support community-based initiatives that utilize and build on the education, skills, and capacities of affected populations to protect themselves;
- Provide individual protection assistance to IDPs and returnees with specific needs;
- Mobilize community participation in SGBV prevention and response;
- Advocate for improved conditions for movement between NGCA/Autonomous Republic of Crimea and GCA;
- Improve processing capacity, humanitarian conditions and protection of rights at the checkpoints; support the provision of administrative services and free legal aid in proximity to the checkpoints;
- Advocate for the implementation of all possible measures that would facilitate protection of the rights of Ukrainian citizens living in NGCA and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. This includes access to pensions and social benefits, as well as to the issuance of identity documentation and birth registration certificates by national authorities, as well as other measures;
- Provide information to residents of NGCA about how to exercise their rights in GCA;
- Support other measures that would foster ties among residents of GCA and NGCA.

#### **Shelter/NFI**

- Conduct light, medium, heavy repairs and reconstruction of housing,<sup>38</sup>
- Assess needs of returnees in NGCA and develop a programmatic response, including community support projects.

### **Strategic Objective #4: IDPs in Government Controlled Area (Zone 3)**

By 2022, IDPs will enjoy increased protection of their rights in GCA (zone 3) through (i) further development of Ukrainian law and policy designed to ensure all Ukrainian citizens can fully exercise their rights without discrimination based on their place of origin or registration as an IDP; and (ii) implementation of a community-based approach that fosters social cohesion and addresses specific needs. Durable solutions to internal displacement will increasingly be attained, as IDPs benefit from legal and policy measures that facilitate integration of IDPs and establish conditions for voluntary return. To achieve this, the following programmatic priorities will be pursued:

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<sup>38</sup>There are areas in NGCA that experienced armed conflict in 2014-2015, but are not along the current contact line. Since few humanitarian actors work in this area, many houses still have not been repaired. This explains why UNHCR continues to conduct shelter activities in NGCA areas that are further from the contact line.

## Protection

- Advocate for the adoption of laws and policies regarding IDPs in line with international standards by providing legal analysis of draft legislation and amendments, as well as technical support and training for members of parliament, national human rights institutions, relevant authorities and partners; engage civil society and IDP communities in the process of law and policy development;
- Build the evidence base for advocacy on IDP protection by conducting protection monitoring and analysing protection trends regarding IDPs;
- Provide legal information, counselling, assistance and representation to IDPs in areas of Ukraine with a significant IDP population via NGO partners, gradually reducing the legal assistance provided by NGOs as the state's Free Legal Aid Centers develop capacities by end 2019 to handle a larger number and wider range of displacement-related cases;
- Support the state-run Free Legal Aid Centers to develop progressively their capacity for responding to displacement-related cases;
- Support the development of effective referral mechanisms among NGO and government partners in selected geographic areas;
- Engage with the judicial system regarding the protection of IDPs' rights, including through training and support of strategic litigation;
- Phase out the provision of individual protection assistance in 2018;
- Support community-based initiatives that utilize and build on the education, skills, and capacities of affected populations to protect themselves and promote the inclusion of IDPs in host communities;
- Strengthen the capacity of national NGOs to advocate for, protect and assist IDPs;
- Support the capacity of the Ministry of Temporary Occupied Territories and IDPs, as well as other line ministries, to protect IDPs and to extend to them access to all public services without discrimination;
- Advocate for and provide capacity building to authorities and local communities to combat intolerance and discrimination against IDPs; engage, promote and facilitate public information interventions focused on the protection of IDPs; build greater public awareness of IDP issues and improve public attitudes toward IDPs.

## Durable Solutions

- Build the evidence base for advocacy on durable solutions by analyzing IDPs' intentions, protection conditions and needs;
- Advocate for the adoption of laws and policies that facilitate integration of IDPs with particular attention to residence registration, IDPs' right to vote in local elections and housing/land/property rights;
- Engage with international development actors and financial institutions to secure the inclusion of IDPs in the strategies, planning and financing instruments of development programs by 2020 with a focus on protection and conflict-sensitive planning and a community-based, participatory approach;
- Advocate for inclusion of IDPs and host communities in joint UN and national planning and processes, as well as the implementation of these plans, with particular attention to Pillar IV of the Government of Ukraine – United Nations Partnership Framework, which focuses on recovery in eastern Ukraine, and for which UNHCR is preparing an economic recovery project in cooperation with FAO and ILO;
- Provide coordination and protection expertise to programs implemented by the state and development actors to improve the access of IDPs and host communities to affordable and sustainable housing, including social housing; support the incorporation of protection measures in housing projects (e.g., beneficiary selection, accessibility, social cohesion, etc.) by 2020;
- Support pilot projects aimed at finding housing solutions for persons living in collective centers;
- Build a network of cities that demonstrate commitment to the integration of IDPs and exchange good practices, e.g. through the Cities of Solidarity initiative.

## V. Key Stakeholders and Partnerships

UNHCR has carried out a stakeholder mapping and analysis to review the large number of stakeholders that contribute to the protection and solutions of all persons of concern to UNHCR in Ukraine. In the mapping of stakeholder exercise, UNHCR identified 129 stakeholders from different spheres: government (central, regional and local level), *de facto* authorities, international and development organizations, UN entities, donors, national and international NGOs, private sector, media, academia, faith-based, opinion leaders as well as diaspora communities. Through engagement of multi-functional team in Kiev and field offices, UNHCR assessed 57 key stakeholders in terms of their level of interest, influence, capacity and potential contribution to the strategy and partnership.

UNHCR works with government partners at the city, oblast' and central levels. City and oblast' government partners deliver public services and contribute to protection and integration. The civil-military administrations of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts coordinate humanitarian response along the line of contact in GCA. At the central level, UNHCR works with the parliament and key ministries (Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs, Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and services (State Migration Service, State Border Guard Service, State Emergency Service) regarding the development of law, policy and regulations. The Ombudsperson for Human Rights is a critical partner, as the specific situation of IDPs, refugees and stateless persons is integrated into the National Human Rights Strategy of Ukraine. The Coordination Center for Free Legal Aid started providing free legal assistance to IDPs country-wide in 2017, and has significant potential to improve the protection of IDPs' rights.

Ukraine has a well-developed civil society, which has mobilized around IDP issues. National NGOs have the potential to sustain their already critical role in delivering protection and assistance, as well as advocating for solutions, long after international organizations scale back their activities in Ukraine. UNHCR will prioritize partnership with national NGOs and invest in strengthening their capacity. Persons of concern are active in community-based initiatives and groups that contribute to this strategy. They also work with many of the national NGOs.

UNHCR currently cooperates with other United Nations agencies and humanitarian actors through the Humanitarian Country Team and the cluster system. It is likely that the architecture of humanitarian coordination will change over 2018-2019, as government authorities increasingly take over coordination of humanitarian activities. UNHCR plans to phase out the shelter cluster in 2018, and the protection cluster by the end of 2019, but will continue sectoral coordination at field level as needed in support of the state's leading role.

Development actors are increasing their activities in Ukraine. Many of their activities are linked to public sector reform, which is a high political priority and going on country-wide across numerous sectors. UNHCR will work with these actors to include protection and solutions for IDPs, refugees and stateless persons into the state's reform policies, for example, in the areas of residence registration, data management, portability of social benefits and housing policy. Engagement with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, is critical as they bring significant financial resources and police expertise to Ukraine.

Development actors also support recovery from the effects of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Government of Ukraine – United Nations Partnership Framework, due to be signed in autumn 2017, represents the common strategic partnership framework between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations System for the period of 2018-2022. UNHCR, along with IOM, has coordinated the development of its fourth pillar, which focuses on recovery and social cohesion in eastern Ukraine. UNHCR will support the achievement of national development priorities, including the SDGs with special focus on Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). UNHCR is also cooperating with ILO and FAO to prepare an economic recovery project under the Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

The stakeholder analysis reveals that other actors have a comparative advantage in leading the response in various areas. UN agencies continue to lead their respective clusters and sub-clusters. Other actors have developed specific programmatic strengths in areas related to UNHCR's IDP footprint. UNDP and IOM have strong livelihoods programming; UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank work on psycho-social issues. For that reason, UNHCR does not plan activities related to livelihoods and psycho-social assistance.

On protection issues, UNHCR engages in joint advocacy and makes referrals to partners with complementary strengths. For example, on child protection, UNICEF leads a sub-cluster and has extensive operations, while on SGBV, UNFPA has taken the lead both in terms of coordination and operations. Other agencies have strengths in human rights (OHCHR), protection of civilians (OSCE, OHCHR, ICRC), mine action (UNDP, OSCE) and national legislative frameworks (national NGOs). UNHCR's focus in the area of protection is on legal advocacy and assistance, including strategic litigation, covering a broad spectrum of displacement-related issues, such as registration and documentation, access to social and economic rights, freedom of movement, non-discrimination and solutions. While the Norwegian Refugee Council coordinates the technical working group on housing, land and property issues, UNHCR plans to develop complementary capacities in HLP for the following reasons: the range, importance and complexity of HLP issues in Ukraine; UNHCR's responsibilities for shelter and protection; and the importance of housing to durable solutions.

## VI. Resources and Management

Despite the protracted conflict situation, political stalemate and prevailing risks of sudden flare-ups of hostilities, along with resulting humanitarian needs, donor support for humanitarian activities will decrease in 2018-2019 and beyond. There will be fewer international humanitarian actors. UNHCR will maintain a longer-term presence in zones I and II given its strengths in emergency humanitarian response, while increasing protection and solution-oriented activities.<sup>39</sup> In zone III, with respect to IDPs, UNHCR will progressively phase out its assistance activities while stepping up its engagement with recovery and development actors and advocating for their more robust presence and involvement, including to work on local integration of IDPs and reintegration of returnees.

In order to respond effectively in zone I, UNHCR will relocate its resources closer to the operational theatre near the contact line where the humanitarian and protection needs are most acute. The physical and political geography of zone I poses operational challenges: It is a long, narrow band (nearly 500 km long and 40 km wide) with bad roads and poor winter weather conditions; in it, UNHCR works with three counterparts, the Government of Ukraine and the separate *de facto* authorities in Donetsk and Luhansk NGCA. UNHCR must be represented at a sufficiently high level to ensure good judgement and timely decision-making. Protection by presence is important in a region with ongoing conflict. UNHCR must have the capacity to respond flexibly and quickly to new emergencies.

To this effect, the Sub-Office in Dnipro will be relocated to Sloviansk in the beginning of 2018 and led by a P-5 Head of Sub-Office. The two Field Offices in the GCAs, in Sievierodonetsk and Mariupol, will be restructured with the upgrade and reclassification of a number of national positions to adjust to the new realities and to strengthen national staffing capacities in order to allow proper transition for the eventual further decrease of the number of international staff in 2019-2022. UNHCR will support the managerial, operational and protection capacities of national partners and local authorities working along the line of contact in GCA with the goal of having a network of groups that can respond swiftly and efficiently to new crises. Depending on the intensity of the conflict and resulting needs, UNHCR may downgrade the field offices on the GCA side of the contact line (Sievierodonetsk and Mariupol) to field units led by national officers in 2019-2020.

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<sup>39</sup> As the HNO 2017 noted regarding the geographic focus of development activities, "[I]t is highly unlikely that recovery and development actors will engage in NGCA or in areas of GCA close to the 'contact line', effectively contributing to create a zone at risk of 'socio-economic exclusion'".

UNHCR will maintain a field presence in NGCA where it has a strategic interest in supporting returnees, preventing displacement and promoting peace. Given the political complexities of the NGCAs, the two Field Offices in Donetsk and Luhansk will continue to be led by an international staff member. Each field office will have one national officer to act as back-up while the head of field office is on leave or R&R. UNHCR will support the national officers appointed in 2018 with developing managerial, operational and protection capacities.

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has not yet finalized its plans for re-configuring the architecture for humanitarian coordination, which complicates UNHCR's plans for drawing down its dedicated staffing for coordination. At present, the plan is to discontinue the dedicated shelter cluster coordinator in mid-2018 and the protection cluster coordination positions at end 2019. However, these plans may have to be revised depending on the approach agreed upon within the HCT. UNHCR will retain capacity for sectoral leadership in shelter at field level, and in protection both at Kyiv and field levels. Furthermore, UNHCR will work with other UNCT members toward stronger coordination among humanitarian and development actors. Depending on the volume of shelter activities in 2019-2022, UNHCR may decrease its procurement and staffing in the supply unit.

UNHCR will need to step-up advocacy and coordination activities with main stakeholders, including development actors, at central and regional levels. UNHCR will recruit a Senior Development Advisor as of 2018 to ensure proper coordination and advocacy with development actors. With its emphasis on advocacy and durable solutions, UNHCR will retain strong capacities in legal analysis, protection monitoring and information management, which are critical for building a strong evidence base for decision-making.

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