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High Commissioner's Programme**

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Human resources, including staff welfare*Summary*

This paper highlights major developments in the area of human resources management since the last update provided to the Standing Committee on “Human resources issues, including staff welfare” in September 2016 (EC/67/SC/CRP.23). It reports on progress made regarding the various commitments in “UNHCR’s people strategy 2016-2021” and on recent review processes in the area of human resources management. An update on “Staff safety and security” is being presented concurrently to the Standing Committee (EC/68/SC/CRP.27).

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I. Introduction

1. By the end of 2016, 65.6 million people were forced from their homes due to persecution, conflict and human rights violations. UNHCR leads and supports international action to protect, deliver life-saving assistance to and find solutions for more than 17 million refugees and others of concern. To achieve this, UNHCR is present in 475 locations in 130 countries and has a total workforce of nearly 15,000 individuals, comprising 10,966 UNHCR staff and some 4,000 affiliate personnel.¹ This represents an overall growth of the total workforce by 59 per cent since 2011. The total workforce gender breakdown is 43 per cent female and 57 per cent male; for UNHCR staff only, the gender breakdown is 39 per cent female and 61 per cent male.

2. Of the total UNHCR staff, 43 per cent are in Africa, 21 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, 13 per cent at Headquarters, 10 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, 9 per cent in Europe and 4 per cent in the Americas. Altogether, 49 per cent are present in the following locations: Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Greece, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, the Syrian Arabic Republic, Turkey, Uganda and Yemen.

3. Overall, 42 per cent of UNHCR staff work in locations classified as hardship and non-family duty stations. Close to half of these staff members are present in some of the most dangerous operating environments, where access to persons of concern is often restricted and where they are required to live in high security compounds with limited movement.

4. UNHCR's global operating context calls for a dynamic and flexible workforce, led by experienced senior managers. It also requires a diverse, gender-balanced workforce that is supported and motivated through professional development and policies that take into consideration the realities of high-risk operating environments and the needs of colleagues at different stages of their lives, taking into consideration work-life balance.

5. National staff, who experience greater exposure in frontline field positions and are often at increased risk in civil-conflict situations because of their ethnic identity and their association with the United Nations, require extra support.

6. Faced with these challenges, UNHCR strives to maintain a strong talent pipeline, effective rotation mechanisms, fair and transparent recruitment and assignment processes, and inclusive and supportive working environments. Efforts are made to develop the skills and capacities of staff, recognize their invaluable contributions and provide opportunities to national staff and members of the affiliate workforce to access internal vacancies. The recruitment of external talent is also undertaken, when required.

7. Following extensive consultations with UNHCR's workforce, a new recruitment and assignments policy was recently adopted for the international professional category. The new policy and its accompanying administrative instruction introduce a rank-in-job approach to appointments and assignments.

8. During the past year, UNHCR continued to implement the four goals of its 2016-2021 People Strategy, in line with the Office's Strategic Directions 2017-2021.

¹ Affiliate personnel include contractors under arrangements with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), individual consultants or contractors, deployees, interns and other persons with contracts under UNHCR's affiliate workforce arrangements.

II. Preparedness and diversity

9. UNHCR is gradually shifting from a focus on the administration of human resources to an approach which analyses workforce demand and supply. The aim is to align the size, composition and skills of the workforce, strengthening planning at the operational level.

10. In 2017, the Office has undertaken an in-depth analysis of its workforce with a data-driven approach to determine human resource needs. Strategic workshops are being held with the divisions to address systemic human resource issues in a pro-active way, particularly for some of the most critical functions in UNHCR such as programme, protection, supply chain management, field safety and information management. To date, eleven of these workshops have taken place, resulting in specific plans of action to align the workforce with the requirements. The next step will be to engage the regional bureaux and key operations.

11. UNHCR is renewing efforts to achieve gender parity as well as to ensure that the organization benefits from a balanced geographical representation and a diverse workforce. The Senior Management Group on Inclusion, Diversity and Gender Equity, which is chaired by the Deputy High Commissioner, is responsible for promoting the implementation of recommendations from a 2016 report² on gender equity, diversity and inclusion. This work is supported by UNHCR's Senior Advisor on Inclusion, Diversity and Gender Equity.

12. Analysis of data on gender and geographic diversity is being used to develop dashboards for senior managers to monitor progress in this area. A survey conducted with the workforce confirmed the need to develop the skills of senior managers to more effectively lead diverse teams and to address issues relating to harassment, discrimination, misconduct and fear of speaking up. The High Commissioner and Senior Executive Team recently recorded a video to highlight the critical importance that UNHCR attaches to inclusion, gender and diversity.

13. In 2016, 1,444 vacancies were advertised, representing a 23 per cent increase from 2015. This includes 599 (or 42 per cent) which were advertised externally. Thus far in 2017, 708 positions have been advertised, including 325 externally. Most new assignments involve rotation to another country, impacting the personal lives of colleagues. Six fast-track assignment exercises were undertaken to rapidly respond to human resource needs for the emergency in the Mediterranean and for the Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan situations.

14. In order to support the prompt filling of vacancies, particularly in areas where UNHCR does not have expertise, UNHCR stepped up its recruitment programmes to bring in external talent. These programmes also provide greater opportunities for national staff and affiliate personnel to enter the international professional category.

15. UNHCR established 23 functional talent pools in critical areas such as information management, communications and coordination. By the end of June 2017, talent pools comprised 595 individuals, of whom 256 were women.

16. The 2016 Entry-level Humanitarian Programme established a cohort of 100 individuals, comprising 60 per cent women, with the majority from underrepresented regions such as Africa and MENA. A total of 41 individuals, of whom 25 were converted from national staff categories, were appointed to positions in field operations. The remaining cohort members were provided with the opportunity to join the talent pools.

III. Performance and competence

17. Career counselling was extended through proactive career support services to national staff and affiliate personnel. In 2016, some 30 per cent of career counselling sessions were

² Available from <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/standcom/576ba8057/framework-future-gender-equity-diversity-inclusion-staffing-unhcr.html>.

conducted with colleagues in these categories. In 2017, skills training in career planning, applications, motivation letters, and interview preparation were delivered via webinar to some 350 staff members around the world.

18. In 2016, over 19,000 UNHCR staff, members of the affiliate workforce and partners enrolled in learning activities, representing a 40 per cent increase as compared to the previous year. New e-learning programmes and other web-based learning activities reflected UNHCR priority areas, including cash-based programming and security awareness.

19. Certification programmes were expanded in the areas of supply chain management, programme management, human resources and protection to bridge competency gaps and enhance career pathways.

20. Leadership opportunities, such as the Certification Programme for Senior Leadership and Management, which is a prerequisite for moving to higher-level managerial positions in the organization, were also provided. UNHCR has also engaged in inter-agency initiatives, such as the Programme for Emerging Women Leaders (EMERGE) and the United Nations System Staff College's Women in Humanitarian Leadership programme.

21. The simplification of UNHCR's performance evaluation system led to a lighter process. This resulted in the timelier completion of evaluations and allowed for greater attention to performance improvement. By the end of 2016, 94 per cent of UNHCR staff had completed performance appraisal documents for the year.

IV. Flexibility and timeliness

22. One of the most significant recent undertakings is the design of a new assignments framework for UNHCR. Following an independent review of the promotions system, the High Commissioner decided in 2016 to move from a rank-in-person promotions system to a rank-in-job recruitment and assignments system for all grades in the international professional category.

23. The new recruitment and assignments policy and accompanying administrative instruction, issued in August 2017, outline the accountabilities of staff members, managers, the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM) and the recommending and reviewing bodies. The objective is to allow the organization to be better able to place the right people on the right positions in the shortest possible time, to manage mobility and career progression in a fair, transparent and efficient manner, to support staff in their professional development and to ensure the effective and responsible use of the organization's capacities and resources. The concept of managerial and functional career paths has been introduced and competitive selection processes are combined with a systematic consideration of gender parity and diversity.

24. In 2017, UNHCR launched an affiliate module of its Enterprise Resource Planning System (MSRP). A global data collection exercise is now being undertaken to centralize personal biographical information and work history, which will facilitate administrative procedures, security measures and follow-up on health and wellbeing matters. The exercise, which will be completed by the end of 2017, is expected to confirm the estimated number of 4,000 affiliate personnel. A policy and operational guidelines on the management of the affiliate workforce will be issued later in the year.

V. Care and support

25. Ensuring "duty of care" is critical for UNHCR. With 87 per cent of UNHCR staff serving in the field, the organization recognizes its moral, legal and financial duty to ensure their health, safety and well-being.

26. Following the findings of a 2016 UNHCR staff well-being and mental health survey, UNHCR launched a pilot project in Indonesia and Jordan designed to reduce the levels of burnout and consequences of indirect exposure to trauma. The project includes improved access to psychological support and assistance to develop self-care plans. The results are expected towards the end of 2017, which will determine future expansion of the project.

27. Vaccination campaigns for nationally recruited staff benefitted more than 500 colleagues in Bangladesh, Guinea, Indonesia, Liberia and South Sudan. Medical assessment and support missions were undertaken to Somalia, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, where field security staff were trained on how to be a first responder following critical and accidents and traumatic incidents. First aid training was also delivered to more than 200 staff in the Central African Republic, Iraq and Mauritania.

28. In some locations, living and working conditions remain a critical challenge, particularly in new refugee emergencies as well as in protracted situations where funding is often limited. Requests for support for field offices continue to grow. In 2016, \$1.2 million was spent on new buildings, equipment and technology, and refurbishment, particularly in Africa and the MENA region. UNHCR is introducing solar power to replace generators in remote locations, where fuel security is a challenge. Making UNHCR compounds more environmentally sustainable is a priority, but requires additional financial support.

VI. Working in partnership

29. UNHCR remains engaged in a number of inter-agency working groups where human resources issues are discussed, contributing expertise and advocating on behalf of its workforce. This includes participation in discussions with the International Civil Service Commission, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Human Resources Network and the Pension Fund. UNHCR contributed to recent United Nations reforms on human resources management, including the comprehensive review of conditions of service and the new classification of duty stations according to conditions of life and work.

30. A task force on “duty of care” was established under the High-Level Committee on Management of the CEB. Chaired by UNHCR’s Deputy High Commissioner, the task force coordinates follow-up action on matters related to “duty of care” in high-risk environments, including in the areas of psychosocial and medical support, human resources, administration and, safety and security. It also seeks to develop system-wide policies, standards and mechanisms to ensure “duty of care” for United Nations personnel and their family members, enabling them to make more informed decisions regarding deployment.

VII. Conclusion

31. UNHCR seeks to fulfil its mandate, while ensuring maximum support to those who work to protect and assist refugees and others of concern across the globe. This is the impetus behind the shift from an administrative approach to one that looks more strategically at the needs of the operations and organization at large. This requires a thorough review of human resources systems, tools and processes.

32. The recent review of UNHCR Headquarters recommended an external assessment of DHRM, which will begin in September 2017. It will entail an in-depth look at the way the Division functions and what will be required of it in the future.