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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General**

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* A/56/150.

** A special effort was made to obtain information that is as up to date as possible from our field offices and our partners, which could not respond immediately, owing to competing priorities.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 55/77 of 4 December 2000, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to it at its fifty-sixth session, taking fully into account the efforts expended by countries of asylum.

II. Action taken to implement General Assembly resolution 55/77

A. Overview

2. Since the last report on this issue (A/55/471), the main refugee groups continue to originate from Burundi (567,000), Sudan (443,000), Somalia (441,600), Angola (421,200), Sierra Leone (401,800) and Eritrea (377,100), followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (340,000), Liberia and Rwanda. Although some repatriation movements have taken place, such as the 21,000 Eritrean refugees and the 22,000 Somali refugees who returned home by mid-year, there are still 3.6 million refugees in Africa, or 30 per cent of the global 12.1 million refugee population. Despite the chronic funding shortage being faced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), it is increasingly asked to meet new demands, especially in assisting internally displaced persons. By the end of 2000, UNHCR was assisting 1.1 million internally displaced persons in Africa. Within the first six months of his tenure, the High Commissioner for Refugees had already visited all the subregions in Africa, and held discussions with the refugees, implementing partners, agencies and authorities.

3. In the East and Horn of Africa, renewed fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea displaced nearly 1.5 million people in 2000, but intensive international efforts led to a ceasefire and the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Many recent refugees and internally displaced persons originating from areas outside the temporary security zone were able to return home by the year's end. UNHCR is working with the Governments of Eritrea and the Sudan to promote the voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees who fled in 2000, as well as others who left

before independence in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Office continues to facilitate the repatriation of Somali refugees from Ethiopia to north-west Somalia; 150,000 have returned since 1997. Despite some progress in 2000 towards a political settlement in Somalia, violence and instability continue to hinder humanitarian access and have hampered repatriation to the southern parts of the country. The civil war in the Sudan shows no signs of abating, leaving some 443,000 refugees in exile and huge numbers internally displaced.

4. In western Africa, the Mano River Basin region of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia remains a complex and insecure environment. Assistance to refugees in the region was interrupted in September 2000, when UNHCR and aid agencies evacuated their personnel from the forest region of Guinea, following a deterioration in the security situation which culminated in the brutal murder of a UNHCR staff member in Macenta and the abduction of another. In May 2001, a relocation operation started to transfer Sierra Leonean refugees to more secure sites further away from the border. The month-long operation relocated over 58,000 refugees and 25,000 voluntarily repatriated. The Office is guardedly optimistic about Sierra Leone, where a decrease in violence has opened up new opportunities for humanitarian activities and is allowing reconciliation, reintegration and reconstruction efforts to take root. More worrying is the ongoing conflict in northern Liberia, particularly in Lofa County. Several thousand refugees have been trickling into neighbouring countries.

5. In the Great Lakes region, war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has displaced a staggering 1.8 million people internally, and forced another 340,000 to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Fortunately, some progressive stabilization of the situation has been evident since January 2001 and implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement has finally begun. The conflicting parties are slowly disengaging, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is deploying troops, and the Facilitator and other actors are working hard to get the inter-Congolese dialogue moving. Former President Mandela and others have kept the Arusha process for Burundi moving forward. However, many obstacles to peace remain in the region and conditions for the voluntary repatriation for Burundian and Congolese Republic refugees have not yet been met.

6. In southern Africa, Angola may now constitute the continent's most acute humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 3.8 million displaced and war-affected people. Over 430,000 Angolan refugees are outside of their country, mainly in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2000, after the Security Council called for greater attention to be paid to their needs, UNHCR launched a limited assistance programme for up to 200,000 internally displaced people on the outskirts of Luanda and in two northern provinces.

B. Regional overviews

7. The regional overviews below focus on the main developments in sub-Saharan Africa since the most recent report to the General Assembly (A/55/471). They have been compiled by UNHCR with contributions from other agencies, notably, the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Programme of Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction.

1. East and Horn of Africa

8. The region is entering a relatively stable period compared to the political and climatic upheavals experienced in the past year. Steady progress is visible in the peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea and tension is easing among several countries in the region, namely, between Eritrea and the Sudan, and between Ethiopia and Somalia. Furthermore, significant progress has been made in achieving durable solutions for residual caseloads in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, civil conflict continues in the Sudan, leaving little optimism for imminent repatriation.

Sudan

9. The Sudan continues to suffer from the consequences of its protracted civil conflict, which makes hope of early repatriation unlikely for the 443,000 Sudanese who have been living in neighbouring countries for decades, and the huge number of internally displaced persons. The two peace initiatives, one proposed by Egypt/Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the other by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, remain parallel, the principal disagreement being the secularization of the

State and self-determination for southern Sudan. UNHCR continues to maintain its current strategy of non-promotion of repatriation and provides care and maintenance to the refugees. It is also actively pursuing a policy of self-reliance for the refugees and the host communities, as well as seeking means for local integration as one possible durable solution for such protracted refugee situations.

Repatriation to Eritrea

10. Following the signing of a peace accord in Algiers, on 12 December 2000, a temporary security zone was established and 4,200 United Nations peacekeepers were deployed in the temporary security zone under the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea with a mandate until 15 September 2001. This created conducive conditions for refugees and internally displaced persons to return, as stability is slowly re-established in both Ethiopia and Eritrea. Repatriation of Eritrean refugees in Sudan started on 12 May 2001 following the successful tripartite agreement signed between Eritrea, the Sudan and UNHCR on 22 March 2001. Some 62,000 refugees are to be repatriated by the end of 2001. The first phase of the returnee programme, which was concluded at the end of July 2001, has seen 20,984 returnees, and another 28,000 have been registered to return. UNHCR continued to register Eritrean refugees living in the Port Sudan area for return to Massawa, Eritrea. Those repatriating include refugees from both categories: the long-staying refugees who left before independence in the 1980s and early 1990s and the new arrivals who entered in May 2000 when the border conflict resumed between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The date for completion of the operation is set for the end of 2002. UNHCR continues to play a major role in the reintegration of returnees and displaced persons by closely monitoring their return.

Kenya

11. Kenya continued to receive a steady influx of asylum-seekers from various countries, mainly from the Sudan and Ethiopia. On 31 March 2001, inter-factional fighting in a southern Somali border town of Bula Hawa resulted in the arrival of about 11,000 Somali refugees. Initially, the Kenyan authorities allowed their temporary settlement within the local community. UNHCR was then requested to relocate the refugees from Mandera to Dadaab refugee camp. In the

meantime, a peace agreement had been concluded between the different clans involved in the conflict, allowing about 4,000 refugees to return to Bula Hawa with their personal belongings. UNHCR provided transport assistance to vulnerable groups during June and the first week of July.

12. In January 2001, a sudden influx of more than 2,000 Tanzanians fleeing post-election violence arrived from Pemba and Zanzibar islands seeking asylum. After working in close coordination with the Governments of Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania to find a solution for the refugees, 674 refugees were repatriated from the Kenyan port of Shimoni, south of Mombasa, to the Tanzanian island of Pemba on 14 May. Prior to the above-mentioned organized departures, about 1,100 refugees had spontaneously repatriated during March and April. A group of 505 refugees who, at the request of the Kenyan authorities, had been transferred to Dadaab refugee camp at the end of April, remained in Kenya as a residual caseload. The lack of agreement in the negotiations between the two Tanzanian parties, the Civic United Front and Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary Party), has complicated the repatriation of this group.

Repatriation to Somalia

13. In spite of the elusive prospects for durable solutions elsewhere in the country, voluntary repatriation to north-west Somalia resumed on 10 April 2001. The total number of Somalis repatriated since 1997 has now surpassed the 160,000 mark. In 2001, out of a target figure of 70,000 for repatriation and dispersal, 28,181 have so far left the camps. This figure included 3,670 Ethiopian nationals (of ethnic Somali origin) who have returned to their communities of origin in Ethiopia. During 2001, UNHCR will aid the dispersal and reintegration of the 10,000 Ethiopians who were refugees in Somalia until 1991 but who, since returning to Ethiopia, have been living in the camps alongside Somali refugees.

14. As repatriation continues, Teferi Ber and Darwanaji refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia closed in June 2001 and Daror, the third of eight Somali refugee camps, will close by the end of the year, bringing the Somali refugee population down to 60,000 in the remaining camps. The camps were opened in 1991 to accommodate Somali refugees fleeing the outbreak of civil war that followed the collapse of the Siad Barre

regime the same year. UNHCR estimates that, by the beginning of 2002, some 50,000 refugees will be in eastern Ethiopia, of which 35,000 are expected to repatriate by June 2002. The remaining 15,000 refugees will be accommodated in two camps, as most are from southern Somalia where the current security situation is not conducive to repatriation. This is in line with the two-pronged UNHCR repatriation strategy, namely, promotion to zones of recovery (north-west and north-east Somalia) and facilitation to zones of transition and/or crisis (central and southern Somalia). Closure of these camps marks a step towards phasing out the decade-long programme for Somali refugees in Ethiopia. It is imperative that the international community support and resource the crucial link between relief operations and sustainable economic development to allow UNHCR to hand over its reintegration activities to relevant partners.

15. Somali refugees in Kenya are also expressing willingness to return. Some 4,500 refugees have stated their wish to repatriate to southern Somalia, while 3,145 refugees have been cleared for repatriation to both north-east and north-west Somalia. UNHCR continues to work with the Government of Djibouti and the Somali authorities of the self-proclaimed autonomous north-west region of Somalia to start voluntary repatriation of the 21,615 Somali refugees in the country.

Ethiopian refugees

16. The chapter on one of the long-standing refugee situations has been closed. With the application of the "cessation clause" that came into effect in March 2000, 10,547 pre-1991 Ethiopian former refugees repatriated from the Sudan and 1,780 from Djibouti. Before the operation, some 12,000 pre-1991 Ethiopian refugees had been living in camps in the Sudan and an even larger number in the urban areas, making the Sudan the largest host country for Ethiopian refugees. Between 1993 and 2001, more than 84,000 Ethiopians returned home from the Sudan.

2. West and Central Africa

17. Some 1,062,200 refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR are to be found in this region. The Mano River Basin countries alone witnessed movements of 705,600 refugees as widespread civil conflicts in the subregion triggered refugees and local populations to flee from border areas further inland, to

their country of origin or to neighbouring countries. Despite these developments, positive signs raise hope for the region. There were a number of high-level missions to the region, including the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Given the precarious security situation, emergency preparedness will be strengthened in close collaboration with the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

18. A series of talks on confidence-building measures and disarmament were held in the first half of 2001 between the United Nations, ECOWAS, the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). A review meeting of the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement, the Fourth Meeting of the Coordination Mechanism and the Meeting on 15 May, which set a time frame for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, opened new opportunities for humanitarian activities. One important political decision was the agreement reached with RUF to withdraw from the district of Kambia, release child combatants and return seized United Nations weapons. As disarmament continues, there is renewed hope for peace which could facilitate further repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees from Guinea.

19. A United Nations inter-agency mission, led by an Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, visited the region from 6 to 27 March 2001. UNHCR provided substantive input to the mission report, entitled "Towards a comprehensive approach to durable and sustainable solutions to priority needs and challenges in West Africa" (S/2001/434). The mission reviewed various peace and security issues in the region, and noted the significant impact of the refugee crisis, particularly the necessity of securing commitment from the host Governments and rebel groups for safe access to and safe passage of refugees and returnees. The mission also recommended that the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone be expanded to cover the three Mano River Basin countries, and that a United Nations office for West Africa be established.

Guinea

20. The operation that started in May 2001 to transfer the Sierra Leonean refugees to more secure areas from the Languette, or "Parrot's Beak", was completed with 58,000 refugees relocated to four camps in

Kissidougou, Albadaria and Dabola Prefectures. A registration and verification exercise under way in those camps will allow better planning of UNHCR protection and assistance activities. As for the Liberian refugees, a sensitization campaign is being conducted for their relocation from Kouankan (Macenta) and other border areas to the new site of Kola (Nzerekoré), where there are plans to host between 20,000 to 30,000 people. The first convoy started on 6 August 2001 with 216 refugees. A total of 15,000 Liberians will be affected by this operation. During the second half of the year, UNHCR will further improve living conditions and consolidate assistance programmes for relocated refugees, and will carefully assess the possibility of return according to clearly established conditions for repatriation. Continued funding support from the international community will be of paramount importance in providing adequate protection and assistance to refugees in Guinea. Compared to the size of the national population, Guinea hosts 58 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, the highest proportion of all African host countries.

Sierra Leone

21. Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone, UNHCR has registered over 55,000 Sierra Leonean returnees from Guinea since September 2000, and has enhanced its reception and absorption capacity for those returnees originating from unsafe areas. These include two host communities and three temporary settlements. Most arrivals are those who left the Parrot's Beak region of south-west Guinea after the closure of camps and termination of assistance. The disturbances in Lofa County, Liberia, are worrying. By July 2001, some 2,448 Liberian refugees and over 28,644 Sierra Leonean returnees had arrived in Daru, eastern Sierra Leone. The significant population movements between Liberia and Guinea into and through RUF-controlled territory in Sierra Leone highlight the importance of securing safe access to and safe passages for both refugees and returnees.

Gambia

22. The resurgence of fighting in mid-May 2001 between the Senegalese Government forces and rebels of the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance provoked the flight of over 6,000 refugees from their homes in Casamance, Senegal. Most of them spontaneously settled along the Gambia's southern

border, but returned to their villages of origin shortly afterwards. Currently some 2,000 refugees remain spread over more than 40 villages in the border area. UNHCR coordinated several joint assessment missions with non-governmental organizations, government officials and other agencies, and responded to immediate needs for food and medicine.

Repatriation to Chad

23. The repatriation of Chadian refugees from Cameroon has now entered its final stage. Chadian refugees fled civil war in the 1980s and were granted prima facie refugee status until 1994. During the first half of 2001, 2,157 refugees from Cameroon repatriated. By early August 2001, 899 urban refugees had repatriated from Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, bringing the total number of those repatriated from Cameroon to 5,530, while some 40,000 Chadians are believed to have been integrated locally. In 2000, a total of 2,521 Chadian refugees repatriated from the Central African Republic, as well as small numbers from Benin and Gabon. The repatriation of Chadian refugees is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Meanwhile, UNHCR continued its reintegration activities in Chad assisting in education, health, microcredit projects and agricultural training.

Central African Republic

24. The attempted coup in Bangui in late May 2001 displaced a significant number of people. Ten refugees were killed in the turmoil and over 25,000 fled to neighbouring countries, mainly to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some 15,000 refugees are in Zongo, in north-western Democratic Republic of the Congo, up to 7,000 are in 20 villages along the Democratic Republic of Congo side of the Oubangui River and another 3,000 to 4,000 are in Libenge, halfway between Betou and Zongo. UNHCR delivered relief-assistance materials to Zongo and a chartered aircraft carried several tons of relief supplies. The UNHCR emergency team on the ground has arranged with non-governmental organizations and local community groups for their distribution.

Gabon

25. UNHCR continued to seek the resettlement of the Congolese ex-military refugees in Gabon: 17,500 of the 18,000 refugees and asylum-seekers are from the Republic of the Congo. Social services, food and health

assistance were provided to increase the capacity of the government schools, which were attended by 80 per cent of refugee children of primary-school age. The construction of ten classrooms has been initiated in Nyanga and Haut-Ogoue, where the majority of Congolese refugees are located.

3. Great Lakes region

26. The Great Lakes region remains one of the most complex and volatile areas in Africa, with some 1.371 million refugees. Multiple external and internal actors engaged in the conflicts further complicate an already bleak humanitarian situation in the region, with negative impact spilling over to surrounding neighbours. Nevertheless, commendable mediation efforts have also taken place: the slow but steady progress made in the Arusha peace process for Burundi; the revival of the Lusaka Peace Accord for the Democratic Republic of the Congo with renewed commitment by President Joseph Kabila; and the holding of various bilateral talks. There were also several high-level missions to the region, including those of representatives of the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

27. In May 2001, the Security Council undertook a mission to the region, holding talks with the signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, essential players and other dignitaries, in an effort to advance and strengthen the peace process. Breakthrough decisions and agreements were reached soon after, including the agreement of the Mouvement de libération du Congo to withdraw unconditionally as of 1 June 2001; the opening of fluvial traffic on the Congo River; the first preparatory meeting of the Inter-Congolese dialogue; and the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo until June 2002. UNHCR appointed a coordinator for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi situations, in an attempt to review the political and security situation and also assess prospects for voluntary repatriation and the subsequent consolidation of repatriation operations.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

28. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has displaced 1.8 million people internally and forced another 340,000 refugees to neighbouring countries. Despite this insecurity, encouraging

developments, in particular the political will shown by various actors to resolve the conflict have opened a window of opportunity to carry out humanitarian assistance and seek durable solutions in the region. Capturing the momentum, Presidents Kabila and Mkapa issued a joint communiqué in May 2001 calling for an immediate tripartite meeting between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania and UNHCR to prepare for repatriating the Democratic Republic of the Congo refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania. This has also been one of the major operation grounds for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) which assisted the internally displaced population of an estimated 1.8 million, of which 250,000 are children under 12 years of age.

United Republic of Tanzania

29. Currently, the United Republic of Tanzania is hosting 388,500 out of a total 600,000 Burundian refugees. Despite the mention in Tanzanian President Mkapa's address to the Security Council in May, and more recently at the meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Council of Ministers held in July 2001, of returning refugees to safe zones inside Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania has given assurances that any return of refugees would be within the context of the Arusha Accord and the Tripartite Agreement on Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania signed on 8 May 2001. A special bilateral committee is to be established to discuss structured modalities for repatriation and resettlement of Burundi refugees living along the Tanzanian western border.

Burundi

30. The general security situation in Burundi remained precarious during the reporting period. United Nations security phases III and IV declared in all parts of the country restricted UNHCR attempts to carry out humanitarian activities. Despite the progress made in the Arusha peace process, the common feeling is that conditions in the country are not yet conducive for voluntary repatriation. Rather than promoting immediate voluntary repatriation, the holding of tripartite meetings is aimed at securing ongoing dialogue, preparing the grounds for repatriation when possible.

31. With regard to internally displaced persons, the Minister of Human Rights signed a protocol with the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator to establish a Permanent Framework for the Protection of internally displaced persons. Furthermore, a joint Government-United Nations-NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) committee was established to monitor returns of internally displaced persons in compliance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.¹

4. Southern Africa

32. The conflict in Angola and the fragile peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to dominate political activity in the region. By June 2001 there were over 345,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in the southern Africa subregion and 3.8 million internally displaced persons in Angola. The region's refugee numbers increased by 7.8 per cent during the first half of 2001.

Angolan refugees

33. The conflict in Angola resumed in 1998 after the collapse of the 1994 peace accord. Over 430,000 Angolan refugees are hosted mainly in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 3.8 million are internally displaced. International humanitarian aid agencies are resuming operations in Uige following signs of improvement in the security situation in and around the province. However, sporadic attacks by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) continue, pressuring the Government and the international community to continue relocating internally displaced persons to safer areas as new arrivals reach the camps, thereby further complicating the work of humanitarian workers. UNHCR is providing assistance to over 200,000 internally displaced persons in the three northern provinces.

34. Following the bilateral initiative taken by Angola and Zambia in May 2001, talks have taken place to establish a mechanism for facilitating repatriation. This was furthered as the Heads of State of Angola, Namibia and Zambia met on 26 June 2001 to review issues of mutual concern on peace and security along their common borders. This positive development could greatly enhance the assistance and protection of refugees and the drawing up of tripartite agreements that will ensure dignified and secure return of refugees. UNHCR is holding consultations with relevant stakeholders and has established a technical committee

to further consider possibilities of return. Meanwhile, small numbers of Angolan asylum-seekers are entering Zambia via the north-west province. Zambia is currently the largest refugee host country within the southern Africa subregion, hosting more than 260,000 refugees, of which Angolans constitute the largest caseload.

35. In Namibia, UNHCR upgraded its representation level from a liaison office to a branch office as of July 2001, to reflect the situation on the ground with the increased arrivals of Angolan refugees. Field offices in Rundu and Osire were also officially recognized, allowing UNHCR to carry out protection and assistance programmes. An average of 300 individuals continue to arrive each month, bringing the registered refugee numbers to 20,600 by mid-2001.

C. Inter-agency cooperation

36. Inter-agency coordination is an effective and efficient way to maximize expected output by bringing together diverse expertise, especially in the provision of protection and assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons. A few specific areas deserve particular mention.

1. Relief assistance

37. As in past years, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) have provided essential assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. UNICEF works in collaboration with other United Nations agencies in all the regions, but during 2000, it put particular emphasis on the Great Lakes region and West Africa in the child-protection, health, sanitation, and education sectors. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF, together with World Health Organization, provided assistance to help control epidemics during the cholera outbreak. National immunization days reached some 10 million children, including the vaccination of 700,000 under the age of 5 against measles. A total of 3.2 million children in Burundi were vaccinated against polio and received Vitamin A. In Guinea, UNICEF set up a multisectoral team at the end of May 2001 to increase the coordination, follow-up and efficiency of UNICEF interventions in Kissidougou. UNICEF also provided drugs, hospital equipment and vaccines in Guinea and in Sierra Leone, where basic health care was provided to both the internally displaced and the local

population. Other essential programmes include education and training on health, nutrition and child protection. Mine-awareness activities are being carried out in Angola, where 3 per cent of child disabilities are caused by landmines.

38. In 2000, WFP reached a total of 12.3 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa. Major programmes were in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Great Lakes region, some including assistance to host populations. WFP also ensures that gender-awareness figures prominently in food assessment, monitoring and distribution processes.

2. Security of refugee settlements and staff safety

Security of refugee settlements

39. The intermixing of armed and military elements with refugees increasingly poses a serious threat to the security of refugees, host communities and humanitarian personnel. Infiltration of small arms and light weapons in the camps heightens the risk of armed attacks on refugee settlements, aggravates tensions between States and creates fertile ground for crime, banditry and violence. As stated in the Guiding Principles on humanitarian assistance, adopted by the General Assembly in annex I to its resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, host countries are primarily responsible for the physical protection of refugees and for maintaining the civilian nature of refugee camps and settlements. However, if the Governments do not have the resources or the capacity to do this, the international community is asked to extend support. UNHCR is often called upon to provide advice, training, technical and logistical support in the absence of security arrangements in refugee settlements.

40. The Office has, in the past, undertaken various initiatives to reinforce security: supporting the establishment of security structures in refugee camps; closely monitoring the security situation and coordinating with partners on the ground; conducting training to promote respect for international instruments on refugee law; providing advice on separating armed elements from civilians; and establishing camps away from borders and fighting zones. In Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR has introduced "security packages" in refugee-populated areas. The primary purpose of these packages is to ensure the civilian nature of

refugee settlements and to maintain law and order in and around the camps. In 2001, UNHCR will provide a similar security package for the refugee camps in Guinea, where the refugees have been transferred further inland from the camps close to the Sierra Leone and Liberian borders. The package, which will be integrated within the overall UNHCR programmes in the country, will cover security tools including vehicles and radio equipment, along with the building of infrastructure, provision of fuel, domestic needs and office equipment. The Office will ensure that policing is in accordance with international standards and norms and that it fully encompasses protection principles, judicial procedures and awareness on sexual and gender-based violence.

Staff safety

41. Between September 2000 and mid-2001, four UNHCR colleagues were brutally murdered in the field and three were abducted. Six International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) officers were killed in April, and a United Nations field security officer fell victim to gunfire in July 2001. Humanitarian personnel are no longer perceived as neutral, but often become targets of threats and attacks.

42. UNHCR continues to work with UNICEF, WFP, and the United Nations Security Coordinator in an effort to enhance the safety of humanitarian personnel in the field. Inter-agency initiatives include more effective use of the United Nations inter-agency Security Management Team, chaired by the Designated Official for Security; deployment of sufficient numbers of field safety advisers to offices in high-risk areas; and better focused security training with experienced input from United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners on the ground. In due course, security training will become mandatory for all staff prior to assignment to high-risk duty stations. Enhanced security communication networks, information-sharing and security analysis are crucial areas that need to be reinforced.

43. The Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator and several humanitarian agencies have set minimum operational security standards as consistent security benchmarks in the field which outline minimum acceptable levels for communications infrastructure, safety equipment, evacuation, training requirements and interaction among agencies and partners. The incorporation of such standards will

inevitably require resources and global understanding and support.

3. Coordination of resources

44. The consolidated appeals process continues to serve as the coordination mechanism for United Nations agencies, the International Movement of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, non-governmental organizations and Governments to develop strategies and set priorities. For 2001, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has launched consolidated appeals processes for 13 African countries and regions, proposing programmes for a total of \$1,588,325,046. By mid-year, \$278,886,223 was made available, or 17 per cent of the total amount. Life-saving activities, such as emergency food aid, receive most of the contributions, while non-food-related issues, such as agriculture, education and sanitation, remain painfully underfunded. Added to the challenges of donor fatigue and the time lag between pledges and the arrival of resources, is the spontaneous funding channelled through increasingly large numbers of organizations outside the consolidated appeals process framework, which are often without reference to coordination mechanisms or common objectives. Given the complexity and multitude of recent conflicts, it is critical that strategic planning and effective channelling be in place to ensure that needed resources are provided in sufficient quantity and in a timely manner for the protection and assistance to refugees, returnees and the displaced, including children, women and the elderly.

4. Assistance to and protection of refugee children and refugee women

Refugee children

45. At the end of 2000, an estimated 3.6 million refugees were in Africa, of which approximately 56 per cent were refugee children under the age of 18. UNHCR protection strategies for refugee children and adolescents include action against separation, sexual exploitation, and military recruitment, and the promotion of education. Children officers and advisers covering Africa actively implement refugee children policies in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, such as UNICEF, WFP, UNESCO and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

Recently, the Security Council has put the issue of protection of children and other vulnerable groups on its peace and security agenda, and the special session of the General Assembly on children will be a landmark in recognizing the adverse effects that armed conflicts have on children and vulnerable groups.

46. During the reporting period, UNHCR, together with UNICEF, ICRC and specialized non-governmental organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee and the International Save the Children Alliance, have undertaken collaborative efforts to strengthen the tracing and reunification of separated children, notably in Guinea and Sierra Leone. While cross-border tracing and reunification was not possible for Burundian and Congolese refugee children, owing to the volatile situation in their respective countries of origin, documentation, inter-camp tracing and reunification continued in the United Republic of Tanzania. Efforts were made to increase coordination and the accuracy of the databases established by the relevant organizations, while tools, such as “photo tracing albums” and radio broadcasts, were in continued use. Action for the Rights of Children (ARC), an inter-agency initiative that includes UNHCR, the International Save the Children Alliance, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, plays an important role in disseminating experience accumulated in the protection and provision of assistance to separated children in the field. Regional ARC activities continued throughout the year and included the training of peacekeepers and military personnel in western Africa, and the integration of ARC materials into the capacity-building initiative in Angola of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

47. Given their vulnerable situation, refugee, returnee and internally displaced children are among those most at risk of illegal recruitment in or near zones of conflict. In coordination with UNICEF and other partners, UNHCR implements various activities to rehabilitate and reintegrate former child soldiers into their communities through, among other things, non-formal education, skills training and income-generating activities. Programmes also include efforts to reintegrate former child soldiers into the refugee community in Guinea and care arrangements for returnee children, including ex-combatants, in Sierra Leone. In the Sudan, significant progress was made by UNICEF in 2000 towards initiating the process of

demobilizing child soldiers reportedly fighting or working with the rebel forces. Some 3,400 child soldiers have already been demobilized. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the Government outlawed recruitment of children under 18 years of age, as of June 2000, formal structures were set up in both Government and rebel-held areas of the country to design and manage the future demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. In Burundi, UNICEF conducted training for social workers in legal assistance for children in need of special protection, for members of the police on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and for magistrates on international instruments protecting minors in detention.

48. The interests of children affected by conflicts also figured prominently in the Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children in Africa, held in Cairo from 28 to 31 May 2001. The Forum, led by the Organization of African Unity, was to feed into the special session of the General Assembly on children to be held in September 2001, at which the African Common Position was developed, calling for the right to protection, especially the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and under foreign occupation. Participating States called upon member States and the international community to increase care and protection for these children; to reduce the impact of wars; and to protect children from recruitment as child soldiers. Member States were also called upon to reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations and OAU Conventions relating to refugees, human rights and children.

Refugee women

49. Mainstreaming gender in all aspects and at all levels of assistance and protection to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons has been a priority for UNHCR. Joining efforts with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Office has adopted policies and guidelines on gender, especially for refugee women, and has translated these policies into action through the senior coordinator for refugee women and regional advisers on refugee women deployed to the field. At the beginning of 2001, a gender adviser joined the emergency response team that was deployed to Guinea and Sierra Leone to provide technical advice and support to ensure that the operations carried out were

responsive to needs and priorities of both women and men. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security called for empowerment of women, including refugee women, to participate actively in the peace process as a key goal of the United Nations, UNHCR and partners. One successful example of this was a group of Burundian women uniting across ethnic, political and class backgrounds and having their voices heard in the peace-building process. Most of the recommendations jointly put forward were included in the Burundi Peace Agreement. At the local level, capacity-building in strengthening peace-building skills is being conducted in several countries, including Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

50. A ten-year review of the UNHCR policy contained in the 1990 Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, is under way and the final results are expected during 2001. UNHCR is working on a gender equality policy that complements the 1990 Refugee Women Guidelines and incorporates new approaches, as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action. In this context, a three-day consultation on the theme "Respect our rights: partnership for equality" was held in June 2001 to define a new partnership between UNHCR and refugee communities based on women's empowerment. The consultation gathered 50 refugee women from around the globe and drew on the experiences of both refugee women and UNHCR to formulate practical ways to strengthen UNHCR policies, processes and programmes for promoting gender equality.

51. UNHCR and its partners have also been developing programmes and activities that address prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence in a variety of refugee settings around the world. This includes the establishment of multisectoral prevention and response initiatives addressing the needs of adolescent girls in Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania. In March 2001, UNHCR convened an inter-agency lessons-learned conference on prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence in refugee and internally displaced settings to assess the progress made in implementing the 1995 UNHCR Guidelines on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence.

5. Education

52. Recent budget constraints in various United Nations agencies have pushed back efforts for education as scarce resources are diverted to immediate "life-saving" interventions. As the integral foundation for refugees and internally displaced persons, from the time of emergency to rehabilitation, development and conflict prevention, education needs to be given more recognition within humanitarian assistance in Africa, for it is life-saving, as can be seen through educational HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. Schooling can also help to protect young people from recruitment into forced labour, military activities and prostitution. In an effort to ensure children's right to education in emergency and crisis situations, an Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies consisting of United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, practitioners and researchers, was founded in November 2000. The Network's current initiatives include: defining consensual guidelines and indicators; exploring mechanisms for certification for students and teachers, notably in western Africa; and developing a range of quality generic learning materials.

53. The UNESCO Programme of Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction has worked closely with UNHCR since its inception in 1993, especially in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and, more recently, in Zambia, in the field of emergency education. Innovative teaching-learning materials and training programmes specifically developed for emergency situations have been shared with partners of the Programme. Throughout the reporting period, UNHCR, UNESCO and UNICEF have also promoted peace and civic education in Africa, especially for countries emerging from conflict. In addition, UNHCR, UNESCO and ICRC shared expertise on "education and conflict" at the regional education seminars held in Africa initiated by the Organization for African Unity. Through its emergency education programme, UNICEF supports programmes in Angola, Burundi, Guinea, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Basic education materials are supplied, training of pre-school volunteer teachers is provided, classrooms in tents have been installed and educational kits and recreational kits have been distributed in refugee camps.

54. The long-term gain in terms of secondary education, vocational/technical education and entrepreneurial training should also be recognized. The Refugee Education Trust, an independent fund established in December 2000 with strong support from United Nations agencies, donors, Governments and non-governmental organizations, is a mechanism designed to provide sustainable post-primary education, motivating refugee children to continue and complete primary schooling in the hope that they may return to their communities as teachers, professionals and leaders after obtaining the necessary skills at the post-primary level. Pilot projects will be carried out in Guinea, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda from September 2001.

6. HIV/AIDS

55. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa is 25.3 million. In other words, 70 per cent of the adults and 80 per cent of the children living with HIV in the world are found in Africa. It has also been recognized that conflict, instability, poverty and food insecurity are fertile grounds for HIV/AIDS transmission. However, refugees often do not enjoy the care provided by national AIDS control programmes. Just as worrisome is the fact that situations of displacement can create forced high-risk sexual behaviour and abuse, as refugees find themselves forced or coerced into sex in exchange for basic needs, such as food, shelter and security. Regional action plans and systematic country reporting are being encouraged at the field level on activities undertaken, mainly relating to prevention, care and safeguarding of refugee rights, often in collaboration with agencies such as UNAIDS, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, WHO and also with non-governmental organizations. In Angola, HIV/AIDS awareness magazines have been published and distributed in collaboration with non-governmental organizations partners. In Liberia, training in health care, hygiene and HIV/AIDS has been provided for refugees, nursing assistants, community health workers and traditional birth attendants and midwives. In the United Republic of Tanzania, all refugee camps have completed camp-specific work plans for HIV/AIDS. Programmes included awareness-raising through voluntary screening and home-based care services; health education sessions on prevention, sexual behaviour,

rights and responsibilities, family planning and voluntary testing; and training of peer health educators. Nonetheless, implementation capacity still remains limited and strengthening existing partnership with UNAIDS and its co-sponsors at the central, regional and country levels, as well as with local and international non-governmental organizations, will be essential.

56. The effort to translate the international community's commitment to combat HIV/AIDS and to mobilize needed resources, especially in and for Africa, can be seen through the two most recent conferences convened: the African Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases which was held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 24 to 27 April 2001, and the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, held in New York from 25 to 27 June 2001. In addition to establishing a global fund for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in order to finance urgent response on prevention, care, support and treatment, the General Assembly committed itself to developing strategies that promote partnership to implement programmes and actions that respond also to emergency situations. The multiplicity of initiatives should become complementary in covering various aspects of the pandemic.

7. Environmental management

57. Taking environmental considerations into account from the outset of operations prevents risking adverse social and economic impacts on local communities, as well as refugees. Based on its Environmental Policy of 1995, UNHCR combines the use of policy development and advocacy with activities that deliver practical support to refugees and communities living close to, or affected by the presence of, refugees and refugee operations. Much of the work done by UNHCR to date in this context has focused on Africa. Increasingly, such activities are designed around community-based approaches to natural resource management, with particular attention being given to women and children.

58. Together with implementing partners, and using earmarked funds for environmental management, UNHCR is currently supporting environmental activities in the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, the Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Practical activities being undertaken include the promotion of fuel-efficient

stoves, reforestation, rehabilitation, agroforestry, permaculture (permanent agriculture), environmental education, awareness-raising and enabling income generation. Monitoring and evaluating impact in refugee operations is also an essential process of environmental activities. Based on a broad consultation process with partners, guidelines on environmental assessment will be available for field testing and finalization in 2001.

8. Post-conflict reconstruction

59. The "Brookings Process", a post-conflict rehabilitation programme led by UNHCR, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has held consultations at various levels to address the gap between humanitarian assistance and sustainable development. However, implementation of proposed programmes was hampered by the security situation in several countries. In April and June 2001, UNHCR met with UNDP and the World Bank, respectively, in an effort to revitalize the Brookings Process and operationalize the rehabilitation programmes for Africa. UNHCR suggested the need to focus on enhancing the productive capacity of refugees and internally displaced persons through empowerment programmes, which could start during asylum and continue later upon return. A budget allocation review of these suggested areas will be conducted to select several projects that can be carried out on the ground.

60. The African Development Bank expressed its particular interest in post-conflict issues during two consecutive meetings, held in February and July 2001. Possibilities for UNHCR to manage emergency funds in the form of grants in refugee and returnee situations will be explored and further meetings held to identify programmes and countries in need. Environment, infrastructure and small-scale projects for local communities are areas of interest in addition to activities to empower refugees.

9. Internally displaced persons in Africa

61. Eruption of conflict continues to displace hundreds of thousands of people. While some cross internationally recognized borders seeking security, others find themselves displaced within their own country, and yet not able to return to their homes because of insecurity. In order to seek solutions for such internally displaced persons, a Senior Inter-agency Network on internal displacement was created

in September 2000, and has thus far carried out assessment missions to Angola, Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a compilation of legal norms designed to help provide protection to internally displaced persons, are widely used by UNHCR and other agencies in field operations.

62. UNHCR fully subscribes to the collaborative approach adopted by the United Nations system in responding to internal displacement. Because UNHCR does not have a global mandate for internally displaced persons, each decision to be involved in such operations must be preceded by an internal assessment. By the end of 2000, seven UNHCR country offices were involved in the protection of and/or assistance to internally displaced persons in Africa. Of the 5.3 million internally displaced persons assisted by UNHCR globally, some 1.1 million are in Africa. Angola, which is the first and only country in Africa to have officially adopted internally displaced person principles, has enacted a law making the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement binding. With technical support from United Nations agencies, the Angolan Government agreed to the minimal operating standards on internally displaced persons, which include site security, land allocation and provision of water supplies and access to markets, health care and schools. Significant improvement is evident in the lives of internally displaced person. In the light of financial constraints, UNHCR can only continue its internally displaced persons assistance when specific and adequate funding is provided. The current situation, with increasingly large numbers of internally displaced persons, calls for consolidated appeals and peace processes to include specific provisions to meet the needs of internally displaced persons and host communities through area-based programmes.

D. Cooperation with continental and subregional initiatives

1. Organization of African Unity

63. There were a number of follow-up activities to the Special Meeting of Governmental and Non-Governmental Technical Experts and policy advisers on international protection organized by OAU and UNHCR in Conakry from 27 to 29 March 2000, and which celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee

problems in Africa of 1969. These are described in the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and OAU (A/55/498). An Addis Ababa-based Follow-up Committee, comprising OAU, UNHCR and ICRC representatives, backed by the Geneva-based Task Force, initiated implementation of the 25 prioritized activities outlined in the comprehensive implementation plan adopted by the Special Meeting in Conakry, an international protection framework for Africa. One such activity was the Regional Judges Round Table that was held in Addis Ababa in November 2000. Judges and magistrates from the east, Horn and Great Lakes region of Africa were invited to discuss current refugee problems and to examine the existing legal instruments relating to refugee issues.

64. Also in line with the comprehensive implementation plan, OAU and UNHCR agreed on a revised Cooperation Agreement on 9 April 2001, which reflects current refugee developments such as statelessness, an issue not covered in the previous Agreement signed in 1969. UNHCR is discussing with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights the development of a memorandum of understanding between the two institutions, in order to strengthen and intensify their collaboration.

65. UNHCR and the OAU Coordinating Committee on Assistance and Protection to Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa co-organized the twenty-sixth ordinary session of the Committee in May 2001 to improve coordination efforts on refugee-related policies and assistance throughout the continent. The Committee, whose members consist of United Nations agencies, regional bodies and non-governmental organizations, adopted a programme of activities to be implemented during 2001. The activities include: further involvement of the national refugee coordination arrangements; conduct of sensitization/accession campaigns on the United Nations and OAU conventions on refugees, focusing on parliamentarians and civil society; and active participation of the Committee in implementing the comprehensive implementation plan. OAU also intends to hold a seminar on security and respect for refugees, reflecting the 2001 World Refugee Day theme "Respect" and the OAU theme "Security of refugees and the challenges posed by the presence of armed elements in refugee camps".

66. At its thirty-fourth ordinary session, held in July 2001, the Heads of State and Government of OAU adopted a resolution, entitled "Fiftieth Anniversary of the Adoption of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of the Refugees", in which member States reaffirmed their commitment to finding durable solutions to refugee problems, most importantly, by facilitating voluntary repatriation, while endeavouring to create conducive conditions to that effect, and concomitantly take preventive measures, and peacefully resolve conflicts in order to avoid the forced displacement of populations.

2. Subregional initiatives

Intergovernmental Authority on Development

67. UNHCR participated actively in the activities of the United Nations country teams in the region, particularly with regard to the advancement of the humanitarian sector. In Ethiopia, the Office, in collaboration with UNDP, agreed to promote and to support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiative on conflict prevention, management and resolution and alleviation of humanitarian crisis through the development of area-based plans of action. These action plans aim at phasing out humanitarian assistance and bringing in longer-term development programmes.

68. UNHCR, together with UNDP, and under the umbrella of the Authority, has also drawn up a regional reintegration programme aimed at rehabilitating refugee-impacted areas in countries of asylum, and at introducing measures that will lead to sustainable livelihoods for returnees to war-devastated areas of their country of origin. Beneficiaries of the programme in countries of origin will include returning refugees, internally displaced persons and demobilized militia. Pilot phases of the programme are to start in the second half of 2001 in the Somali National Regional State of Ethiopia, in Djibouti and in the north-west and north-east regions of Somalia. UNHCR has worked closely with IGAD to ensure that humanitarian issues, including refugees and their voluntary repatriation, have stayed on the agenda of peace initiatives for Somalia and the Sudan.

Economic Community of West African States

69. For the western Africa subregion, coordination measures have been taken by UNHCR and the

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to provide protection and assistance to the refugees within the current political and security situation in western Africa. These measures include UNHCR-ECOWAS cooperation centres on prevention of forced displacement, safety of humanitarian workers, security of refugee settlements, voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and capacity-building. Preparations are under way for the signing of a memorandum of understanding that will include issues on: prevention of forced displacement; the upholding of refugee protection principles, with special attention given to the needs of refugee women and children; security of refugee settlements and safety of humanitarian workers; measures on durable solutions; and capacity-building.

Southern African Development Community

70. For the southern Africa region, UNHCR works in close collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the areas of refugee movements; mechanisms for managing and addressing root causes of forced population movements; conflict resolution; preventive diplomacy; and peacemaking. In 2001, UNHCR held consultations with all SADC member States to discuss the refugee situation and operations in the region, and raised awareness on refugee issues during SADC ministerial and parliamentary meetings, in conformity with the provisions of the memorandum of understanding signed by SADC and UNHCR in 1996. SADC members also participated in the regional Symposium on Global Consultations held in Pretoria in February 2001.

III. Conclusion

71. On 4 December 2000, the General Assembly adopted resolution 55/76, in which it decided that 20 June would be celebrated as World Refugee Day, originally celebrated as Africa Refugee Day when the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa came into effect in 1974. The Assembly applauds the courage refugees have shown and the contribution they have made, and reinforces the message that the refugee issue is a shared responsibility towards which multiple responses should be focused.

72. The year 2001 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951, which is the cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime. Within the context of the Global Consultations on International Protection, which seek to promote the full and effective implementation of the 1951 Convention and to develop complementary new approaches, States parties to the Convention will gather at the ministerial level on 12 December 2001 to reflect on developments in the refugee situation since 1951. It will be crucial for all those participating to engage in an open dialogue on the challenges that UNHCR and refugees face in this rapidly changing world.

73. As UNHCR faces increasing demands despite its limited resources, I strongly believe that, in collaboration with the United Nations system, regional bodies, civil societies and other partners, the Office will continue to take the lead in the protection and provision of assistance to refugees and displaced persons in Africa.

Notes

¹ E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, annex.