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Update on UNHCR's operations in Africa - 2010

This update presents some examples of challenges, progress and developments in the region since the last strategic overview presented to the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2010. A more comprehensive report will be provided in the forthcoming Global Appeal 2011 Update.

A. Major challenges and new developments

During the first eight months of 2010, Africa witnessed a number of complex humanitarian and emergency situations, which caused new displacement.

Positive developments during this period include the ongoing naturalization of Burundian refugees in the **United Republic of Tanzania** and the start of the ratification process by States of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

Security and humanitarian conditions in south and central **Somalia** steadily deteriorated. Violence in Mogadishu continued unabated, causing further displacement inside Somalia and across the borders. Since the beginning of the year, more than 60,000 Somalis have been forced to flee to neighbouring countries, straining services and facilities in the already overcrowded camps in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. In light of this, UNHCR prepared a regional contingency plan for which resource requirements were presented to the international community in May 2010 through a supplementary appeal.

The expansion of Ifo camp in Dadaab, **Kenya**, progressed with the construction of essential infrastructure. In **Djibouti**, the Government agreed to a new site that will allow the Office to improve standards of assistance to new arrivals from Somalia and help decongest the existing camp. In **Ethiopia**, four refugee camps were opened in the Dollo Ado area to accommodate the ongoing arrivals from Somalia.

Sudan remains at the centre of the largest humanitarian operation in Africa. In Darfur, insecurity and reduced humanitarian space continue to present the main challenges. The recent series of expulsions and kidnappings of a number of aid workers had a negative impact on the implementation capacity of humanitarian organizations in the region. Meanwhile, the national elections which took place in April were a critical milestone, and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is entering its most crucial phase with the forthcoming referendum scheduled for January 2011. The referendum will give the people of Southern Sudan the choice between independence or continuation as part of a single, centralized Sudanese State. UNHCR is watching these political developments closely so as to be prepared in case of any ensuing population movements and in light of the potential for certain population groups to become stateless.

Hostilities in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, in particular in parts of the Kivus, Province Orientale, Maniema and northern Katanga, have led to further

displacement, worsening the humanitarian situation and impeding the return of more than 2 million IDPs and refugees.

Conflict in the **Central African Republic** and communal violence in northern **Ghana** caused new displacement in 2010. Nearly 2,000 refugees from the Central African Republic sought refuge in south-eastern Chad, and at the end of March, 6,000 Ghanaian refugees fled to Togo following three years of unresolved conflict between communities.

The **security of beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel** was repeatedly at risk in several parts of the continent. Reductions in the military component of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as well as the Mission in Chad and the Central African Republic (MINURCAT), raised concerns regarding the security frameworks that make the delivery of humanitarian aid possible.

B. Progress on strategic priorities

(i) Redoubling efforts in the search for durable solutions

In July 2010, UNHCR reviewed progress made in the implementation of the **Comprehensive Strategy for the Rwandan and Burundian** refugee situations, in light of the recent political and security developments in those two countries. UNHCR has revalidated the overall strategy, including eventual invocation of the cessation clauses, while the review of these two situations is in process.

Repatriation

Since the beginning of 2010, the return of refugees to the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** has slowed down and is a source of concern to UNHCR. Rampant insecurity and armed conflict, abuse by armed men against the civilian populations, including sexual and gender-based violence, and the absence or limited presence of State authorities, UN agencies and development actors in return areas, continue to pose serious challenges to the return of Congolese refugees to the Kivus and to Katanga Province.

UNHCR anticipates the spontaneous return of some 3,500 Congolese refugees from the Central African Republic before the end of 2010. In addition, 17,800 refugees in the Republic of the Congo have already indicated their willingness to repatriate to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR is strengthening its presence in Equateur province to enhance protection monitoring preparations for the return and reintegration of those refugees who had fled violence in Equateur at the end of 2009.

Between January and August 2010, some 3,500 **Angolan** refugees returned home from Zambia. The modalities for the return of Angolan refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be discussed at a tripartite meeting to be held between the respective Governments and UNHCR.

The slow pace of returns to **Southern Sudan** since the beginning of 2010 can be attributed to the uncertainty surrounding the referendum in January 2011, as well as the increase in inter-ethnic violence in some areas. However, if there is a peaceful conclusion to the referendum, the number of returns can be expected to rise during the first six months of 2011. In Southern Sudan, refugees and IDP returnees are benefiting from more than 1,000 UNHCR reintegration programmes in areas of return, notably in health, education, water and sanitation, and livelihood activities.

Local integration

Initiatives for **local integration** are moving ahead in 2010. UNHCR is assisting Liberian refugees who have opted to integrate locally in countries of asylum. This includes negotiating with concerned Governments with regard to integration programmes and the provision of national passports, with the aim of bringing closure to the local integration programme for this group of refugees by the end of 2011. In the United Republic of Tanzania, in July 2010, the Government authorities launched the “National Strategy for Community Integration Programme”, outlining relocation

and integration measures for the 162,000 former Burundian refugees who have now become Tanzanian citizens.

Resettlement

Making **resettlement** a viable and meaningful component of comprehensive protection strategies in Africa continues to be a primary objective for UNHCR. Diversifying both the nationalities of refugees considered for resettlement and the location of UNHCR's resettlement activities remain key goals in Africa. In order to respond more effectively to protracted refugee situations on the continent, significant efforts have been made to assure adequate levels of resettlement staff. As a result, since the start of the year, nearly 11,000 refugees have been referred for resettlement. UNHCR will continue to focus on populations such as Somalis, Eritreans and Sudanese from Darfur, for whom resettlement is often the only option.

(ii) Promoting a favourable protection environment

Promoting the ratification and implementation of the recently adopted AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and pursuing the implementation of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy across the continent, are some of the key objectives for 2010 and beyond.

Refugee status determination (RSD) management continues to be a challenge. In 2010, UNHCR has intensified its support for the development of national RSD capacities in several countries.

UNHCR continues to face critical backlogs in several mandate operations, in particular in Nairobi, Kenya, and tremendous pressure on reception, registration and RSD activities. Many Governments face challenges in building fair, effective and sustainable national asylum procedures. The growing southward movement of refugees and asylum-seekers from the Horn of Africa in mixed migratory movements, often through smuggling networks, places severe strains on the national asylum systems of the countries en route. The phenomenon also risks undermining public support for asylum, or generating more restrictive practices, such as encampment. South Africa is the main destination country in Africa and the leading recipient of asylum claims in the world, with some 220,000 claims in 2009.

In 2010, UNHCR intensified its cooperation with concerned governments and agencies to strengthen the **protection response to mixed migratory movements**. In September 2010, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, with the support of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), convened a regional conference involving government representatives from the East and Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes and Southern Africa. The conference allowed States, civil society and international organizations to devise strategies for responding to mixed migratory movements in an effective, coordinated and protection-sensitive manner. In West Africa, building on the outcome of the 2008 Dakar Conference, UNHCR and IOM organized several regional workshops aimed at strengthening protection capacity and creating networks amongst key stakeholders.

The overall protection environment in Africa continues to raise concern. Despite some positive developments, such as the allocation of additional land for refugee sites in several countries and the introduction of "out-of-camp" policies in others, UNHCR has noted a worrying rise, in some countries, in the detention and *refoulement* of asylum-seekers and refugees, which in some cases resulted in fatalities.

Although the **Somalia** crisis is one of the most compelling emergency situations, protection space for Somali refugees continued to shrink in Africa and beyond. The situation was further aggravated by the Al Shabaab terrorist attacks in Kampala which killed more than 70 people in July 2010. The forced return of asylum-seekers and refugees to Somalia by authorities in Africa and abroad remains a grave concern.

Statelessness

In Africa, UNHCR strives to establish and expand its operational “footprint” with regard to **statelessness**.

In Ethiopia, the Office has engaged in statelessness research in cooperation with the University of Addis Ababa, and has developed follow-up activities, such as the establishment of legal clinics, training, and advocacy for legal reform. In Djibouti and Kenya, the results of a mapping exercise of stateless-related risks and challenges are being fed into operational planning for 2011 and beyond. In Côte d’Ivoire, UNHCR and its partners have provided training on citizenship-related issues to more than 100 civil servants, and the Office and the Ministry of Justice have carried out joint field missions with the aim of identifying populations at risk of becoming stateless.

In Africa climate change and related natural disasters added to the scale and complexity of human mobility. Heavy rainfall caused flooding in several West African countries and a landslide in Uganda, affecting thousands of people. Niger, northern Mali and other Sahel countries, are facing a major food security crisis and this is already generating inter-community conflicts in Niger.

C. Financial information

For its ongoing programmes in Africa, UNHCR’s Global Needs Assessment (GNA) budget for 2010 totals some USD 1.12 billion. The Office has continued to respond to new emergencies or changing situations resulting in new operational and budgetary requirements. USD 38.4 million was requested to respond to the ongoing displacement of Somali refugees into Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Supplementary requirements (USD 23.5 million) were also submitted for the development of Ifo camp in Dadaab, Kenya, to accommodate new refugees and to meet critical needs in the areas of protection, shelter, health, water and sanitation.
