

BURUNDI SITUATION

UNHCR REGIONAL UPDATE

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NAIROBI – Regional Representatives of OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP have agreed to develop a Regional Refugee Response Plan to respond to the exodus of refugees from Burundi into Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The agencies reached agreement during a two-day inter-agency consultation in Nairobi (11-12 May), convened by Mr. Stefano Severe, Regional Refugee Coordinator for the Great Lakes Refugee Situation. Severe is also UNHCR's Regional Representative in the DRC.

The plan will be finalized before the end of May and cover an initial period of six months starting 1 April 2015, the date when refugee flows started.

Explaining the consultative process to donors Severe said that throughout 2014 and 2015 UNHCR has been monitoring developments in the Great Lakes Region, particularly population movements and forced displacement linked to scenarios in eastern DRC and Burundi. He added that he had met with Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes to explore synergies between the political and peacebuilding initiatives carried out by and on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The situation in Burundi continues to deteriorate with large-scale refugee movements into neighboring countries with numbers rapidly approaching the 60,000 mark.

The Regional Refugee Coordinator commended UN and NGO partners' ongoing efforts to protect and assist persons affected by the Burundi crisis. "While focusing on emergency response, I would like to reiterate the primacy of protection, the importance of placing "Human Rights Up Front" and of including durable solutions in our responses," he said. He added that emergency response should include support to early recovery as a lifesaving measure as emphasized by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the World Bank and the UN Development Programme.

Regional partners will be looking to harmonize approaches, planning scenarios and projections of refugee numbers as well as priority actions and minimum standards of response across the affected countries. The Burundi population is highly vulnerable, and with escalating prices of basic commodities in the country, the imperative of quick effective responses to their needs cannot be overstated.

Some 55,000 asylum seekers have sought refuge in Rwanda, Tanzania and DRC over the past six weeks after election-related political tensions and sporadic violence provoked instability in Burundi. At country level, UN and NGO partners in countries of asylum are already engaged in active responses with Governments of countries of asylum.

- END -

KEY FIGURES

48,288

Number of Burundian refugees in Tanzania as of 13 May

30,000

Estimated number of Burundian refugees in Kagunga

16,308

Number of Burundian refugees relocated to Nyarugusu camp

PRIORITIES

- Relocation of refugees to safety from border areas
- Preparation of refugee sites on land allocated by governments of host countries
- Life-saving emergency protection and assistance interventions including in the sectors of registration, shelter, domestic items, food, water, sanitation, hygiene, health.
- Identification and protection of children including family tracing, family reunification and alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children.
- Prepositioning of relief items for anticipated mass outflows into neighboring countries

