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**Update on coordination issues: strategic
partnerships****Contents**

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I. Introduction

1. During 2011, UNHCR has been called upon to respond to a number of critical emergencies, including in West Africa, the Libya situation and, more recently, the Horn of Africa crisis, all of which resulted in major displacement of people throughout the respective regions. In order to step up its response to these situations and to further strengthen its coordination capacity, UNHCR has relied on strategic partnerships with United Nations sister agencies as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental actors. At the same time, UNHCR has participated actively in the discussions led by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) over the past ten months aimed at enhancing the inter-agency response to complex emergencies and building greater synergies between the various United Nations agencies present on the ground. Beyond the emergency phase, UNHCR has been reaching out to development-oriented partners to jointly engage in the design, funding, and implementation of durable solutions for persons of concern to the Office, focusing in particular on a number of protracted situations.

2. Key aspects of these partnerships are summarized in this paper. The examples chosen are cross-cutting and fundamental to UNHCR's work.

II. Improving humanitarian response

A. Leadership and partnership in refugee emergencies

3. UNHCR is promoting a leadership model to provide greater predictability and better address its partners' needs and expectations with regard to the coordination of humanitarian responses to refugee situations. Contingency planning, needs assessments, information management, and the coordination of fund-raising activities for refugee operations are services that partner organizations legitimately expect UNHCR to manage in close coordination and collaboration with them. UNHCR is keen to share its expertise and knowledge of emergency preparedness and response more systematically, while at the same time learning from its humanitarian partners.

4. At the operational level, UNHCR continues to work particularly closely with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and with the World Food Programme (WFP) in articulating more predictable partnerships and improving collaboration. For example, in response to the Horn of Africa crisis in July 2011, the High Commissioner, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and the Executive Director of WFP agreed to strengthen their cooperation at country level in support of other existing coordination mechanisms. In Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti, the three organizations will work towards implementing programmes more efficiently; encouraging synergies and favouring complementarities to avoid duplication; and uniting efforts to fill operational gaps. Other organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), have also offered to partner more closely with UNHCR in the Horn of Africa, for example in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia, and in Dadaab, Kenya.

5. In Liberia earlier this year, together with the host Government and host communities as well as other major partners, UNHCR developed a "Plan of Action" outlining measures required to enhance the response to the refugee crisis. UNHCR is continuing to work closely with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), notably with the UNMIL Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General who is also the Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator. UNHCR participates actively in UNMIL working groups as well as in the Senior Policy Group which brings together UNMIL senior management with relevant United Nations agencies and the NGO community.

6. At the outset of the Libya crisis, the High Commissioner and the Executive Director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched a joint humanitarian operation to evacuate third country nationals (migrants) and assist persons of concern to UNHCR. A joint Humanitarian Evacuation Cell was active from 2 to 28 March. By 2 April, 404 humanitarian evacuation flights had been arranged and over 82,000 individuals successfully repatriated to their countries of origin.

7. In order to further strengthen UNHCR's humanitarian response, the High Commissioner has set two priorities for enhancing the organization's protection and emergency response capacities. Accordingly, the Office is restructuring its corporate emergency response mechanism: a) to improve leadership by facilitating the selection and placing of qualified and experienced staff in key leadership and managerial positions, including country offices, clusters, and emergency support missions; and b) to enhance predictability and inter-agency collaboration in various areas of its response. For both priorities, inter-agency collaboration and partnerships are critical elements for success. Recent emergencies have shown that reinforcing inter-agency cooperation in concrete situations and around specific areas of intervention has been essential for shaping an effective collaborative response.

8. In responding to refugee and complex emergencies, the High Commissioner has set the benchmark for delivering life-saving protection and assistance, including core relief items, at up to 600,000 persons of concern, with initial delivery within 72 hours of the emergency alert. While fully utilizing UNHCR's internal capacity, the Office will also upon complementary external deployment capacities and the support services of a number of emergency standby partners, such as: Canadem (Canada), DFID (United Kingdom), the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Emercom (Russian Federation), GOAL (Ireland), and RedR Australia.

9. In an effort to provide up-to-date tools and guidance that can be used by all partners and that reflect today's operational context and coordination mechanisms, the *UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies* will be revised. At the same time, future editions of the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Handbook for Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators on Emergency Preparedness and Response* will include more specific guidance on the collaborative approach UNHCR is currently refining in order to make humanitarian response to refugee crisis situations more efficient.

B. UNHCR's participation in inter-agency responses in complex emergencies

10. UNHCR's reinvigorated partnership approach is also reflected in its efforts, together with other IASC members and non-governmental partners, to jointly review and improve the overall humanitarian response. UNHCR fully supports the efforts of ERC Valerie Amos to further strengthen humanitarian response at the level of inter-agency coordination. Under her guidance, UNHCR is contributing to discussions in various IASC fora on how to substantially improve leadership and accountability for performance, as well as accountability to beneficiaries, in the immediate phases of large-scale emergencies.

11. Its commitment to ensuring that country offices have strong leadership and the requisite support at the onset of an emergency allows UNHCR to carry out its specific operational responsibilities or, in emergencies that require the activation of the cluster approach, to participate fully in the United Nations country team (UNCT) planning and decision-making, led by the humanitarian coordinator. UNHCR is incorporating into its accountability frameworks (job descriptions and performance appraisals) the contributions expected by its representatives and other staff towards the collective results being pursued by humanitarian teams and the UNCT.

12. UNHCR actively participates in efforts within the IASC to streamline the cluster approach in order to relieve the burden of multiple coordination processes for teams in the Field. In UNHCR's view, it is paramount to safeguard the key aims of the cluster approach, i.e. to provide predictable capacity and quality leadership to humanitarian delivery; to adequately fill any gaps; to avoid overlaps; and to make the best possible use of capacities in the Field, including among local government and civil society actors.

13. The experience gained and capacities developed in leading and coordinating the clusters for internally displaced persons (IDP) operations (protection, camp management and coordination, and emergency shelter) have proven beneficial for UNHCR with regard to handling refugee emergencies. During the past year, UNHCR led the Protection Cluster in 23 countries; the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster in 7 countries (often sharing responsibilities with partners such as the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and IOM); and the Emergency Shelter Cluster in 9 countries, in addition to sharing shelter cluster coordination responsibilities with IOM and UNICEF in Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo respectively.

III. Transitional solutions initiative

14. The search for durable solutions is ongoing for the Office. UNHCR strongly believes that engagement with development organizations should start as early as possible in field operations in order to achieve sustainable solutions for those displaced and to establish the basis for further development.

15. Following previous efforts to engage development partners earlier and more effectively to address protracted situations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNHCR, with inputs from the World Bank, other United Nations agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, and bilateral donor agencies, have jointly shaped a new Transitional Solutions Initiative (TSI) which places solutions for the displaced on the development agenda of governments, donors, and programmes of development agencies.

16. UNHCR has consistently supported this approach within the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and through the UNDG-ECHA (Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs) Working Group on Transition. This time around, the fund-raising component is fully integrated within the TSI, and cooperation with UNDP is a fundamental aspect. UNDP and UNHCR have made human resources available to facilitate the process globally and at country level. The TSI provides the means for joint planning and financing to facilitate the transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development, taking into account both the needs of the displaced and those of host communities. It applies to both post-conflict return and reintegration, as well as to protracted refugee situations. UNHCR has also been able to engage a number of host governments and key donors, governmental as well as corporate, in the TSI. The TSI is based on the following principles:

- inclusive participatory and inter-agency approach;
- capacity building of national and local partners;
- non-discrimination and gender equality;
- building on existing new practices; and
- mainstreaming displacement issues into developing plans.

17. Eleven pilot countries were identified, and consultations held with the respective field offices and host governments. Implementation has started in Eastern Sudan with a three-year self-reliance project which aims at consolidating and closing camps, integrating services and creating opportunities for livelihoods, supporting both refugees and host communities. Initial funding has been made available by the Norwegian Government and

the Ikea Foundation. Plans for the United Republic of Tanzania, Colombia, and Nepal are well advanced. Projects stemming from the TSI are reflected in the respective countries' United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), garnering support from national authorities, the UNCT and donors.

IV. Anniversary commemorations

18. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. These occasions provide a valuable opportunity to bring forced displacement and statelessness to the forefront of international attention. To make this commemoration year a success, the support of UNHCR's partners worldwide, including governments, NGOs, regional organizations, the academic community, and civil society in general, is paramount.

19. Non-governmental partners are playing an active advocacy role during the commemorations of the two Conventions. UNHCR is counting on NGOs in particular to advocate that States make concrete and ambitious pledges at the ministerial event which will take place in December and, as several have already done, to propose possible pledge language to Governments. Some NGOs have also helped to organize and participated in a number of expert meetings, while others are collaborating with the Office on specific protection issues. NGOs will participate in the ministerial meeting as observers. Bearing in mind NGOs' important role in the commemorations, UNHCR has supported the temporary reinforcement of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) to increase its capacity. Following the ministerial meeting, UNHCR trusts that NGOs will continue to work with the Office to keep the momentum going and ensure that States fulfil their commitments.

20. In order to ensure that the commemoration process benefits from the voices of refugees, a number of NGOs in the developing world, in cooperation with the University of New South Wales, have helped UNHCR to organize seven regional dialogues with some 1,000 forcibly displaced women and girls.

21. UNHCR has also organized the first Refugee Congress to take place in the United States. Sixty refugees from the past six decades participated in the two-day event in Washington D.C. and spoke, based on their own experience, about the challenges that refugees face around the world, as well as the contributions they bring to host communities. Participants used the occasion to make policy recommendations for the design, implementation, and evaluation of refugee integration programmes.

22. Furthermore, a number of agreements and events related to the commemorations have been arranged through collaboration with regional organizations and expert and academic communities. In November 2010, a group of Latin American States adopted the Brasilia Declaration on the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons. In April of this year, the Inter-Parliamentary Union met in Panama City and adopted a statement in support of UNHCR. A series of expert meetings has also been organized throughout the year on topics such as climate change and displacement, statelessness, burden sharing, the complementarity of different areas of law, and maritime protection.

23. Civil society plays a key role in supporting the cause of refugees and stateless persons. With this in mind, UNHCR's communications strategy has been enhanced to better focus public awareness on relevant issues and engage the public in garnering sympathy and support for refugees and stateless persons.

V. Conclusion

24. In this complex and continuously changing world, partnership remains the cornerstone of the Office's response to humanitarian challenges as it endeavours to fulfil its mandate. The examples illustrated above show how interlinked UNHCR's work is with that of its partners, including host and donor governments, United Nations sister agencies, IOM, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations. Taking into consideration today's permanent interaction between governments and civil society, UNHCR counts on civil society to advocate that the human rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons be upheld. The Office also sincerely appreciates the key role that national and local partners play in humanitarian operations, and remains engaged in providing them with substantive support and in further developing the capacities of these crucial partners at the forefront of its work.
