

Fifty-ninth Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme

Geneva, 6 October 2008

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Geneva. At the end of our meeting last year, I made a number of commitments to you. Today I would like to report on the progress we have made in those areas. Before doing so, however, allow me to make some observations about the global context of our work.

When the Cold War came to an end, Francis Fukuyama published a best-selling book, *The End of History*. According to the author, the triumph of liberal democracy and economics made it possible to envisage what he described as "the limitless accumulation of wealth, and the satisfaction of an ever-expanding set of human desires." But he was wrong. Rather than the universal peace and prosperity that some anticipated in the early 1990s, we are now confronted with an accumulation of adverse trends. History has returned, and with a vengeance. Globalization has lifted millions out of poverty, but has also increased income differentials. The process of climate change and the increased incidence of natural disasters are threatening lives in many parts of the planet. As a result of these trends, growing numbers of people are on the move, leaving their homes to look for greater security and better opportunities.

Populations are growing and urbanization is accelerating in the developing world. Cities are becoming bigger and more densely populated. In

many societies, an inadequate number of jobs are available for all those in the labour market. Rising commodity and energy prices add to the resulting tensions. Far from enjoying "the limitless accumulation of wealth", turbulence in the financial markets is leading people throughout the world to ask if they can protect their income, their savings and their pensions.

These adverse trends are compounded by disturbing developments in the political arena. Competition for scarce resources has become an increasingly important factor in provoking and perpetuating violence. We are confronted with a series of interlinked conflicts in an arc of crisis that stretches from South-West Asia to the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. Some of them are deepening, with important implications for global security.

More localized disputes have flared up in other parts of the world. Climate change, extreme poverty and conflict are becoming more and more interrelated. As a consequence, forced displacement is increasing. In 2008 and in Africa alone, we have seen the flight of many thousands of people, coming into countries such as Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia.

These developments have had important implications for UNHCR. In the last 18 months, we have provided emergency response support to over 40 situations in different countries. In 2007, we made a total of

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197 emergency deployments. We have already exceeded that figure some months ago this year.

Spending from our Operational Reserve on emergencies increased from \$34 million in 2006 to over \$87 million in 2007, and the figure for 2008 will be some \$150 million. We estimate that in 2008 our global expenditure will increase to \$1.6 billion, compared to \$1.1 billion in 2006. These figures would not have been possible without increasing donor confidence and support but they highlight the dramatic pressure that is being placed on our capacity and our resources.

Let me now turn to the commitments that I made to you at the end of ExCom last year.

First, a commitment to our beneficiaries

At the end of 2007, there were 11.4 million refugees, and the number is rising. Eighty per cent of them are to be found in their regions of origin. We cannot overestimate the generosity of those developing countries that shoulder this responsibility but which continue to extend hospitality to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of refugees: countries (and let me list them in alphabetical order) such as Chad, Ecuador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania, to mention just a few.

The number and proportion of the world's refugees living in urban areas is also growing very rapidly. And it is a

challenge that is difficult to face. Life in urban centres is very different from life in camps. We will shortly be issuing a policy statement on urban refugees, and the specific challenges they face will be an important focus of our policy development and evaluation activities in the months to come. The issue of humanitarian action in urban areas will then be examined in greater depth at the 2009 meeting of the Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

The number of internally displaced persons is also on the rise. Of a total of 26 million who have been displaced by armed conflict, we are now working with some 14 million in 28 countries. That is more than double the number in 2005. I will return to the protection needs of these people in a later section of my presentation.

Ladies and gentlemen, beneficiaries are not numbers. They are people who have rights and needs. The time has now come for UNHCR's planning process to be based on those rights and needs, rather than on the support that we expect to receive from donors. We have consequently launched a Global Needs Assessment process, starting in eight pilot countries. The next step will be to mainstream this approach in all our operations.

Another of my key objectives has been to make efficiency savings, especially at Headquarters, in order to release additional resources for our field operations. This is already making a real difference to the lives of our beneficiaries. I made a commitment to our staff that any savings in staff costs

would be made available for programmes to meet basic needs in the field.

In 2007, \$15 million were made available to address crucial gaps in the areas of malaria, malnutrition and reproductive health, as well as sexual and gender-based violence. This year we mainstreamed these projects, and allocated a further \$7 million to initiate them in new countries.

We are already seeing positive results. In Djibouti and Ethiopia, the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel rose from below 20 per cent to an average of 90 per cent after investments in maternal health. In six large operations affected by malaria, mortality and morbidity rates dropped almost immediately following the introduction of new therapies, improved prevention and diagnostics.

In Ethiopia, the malaria-affected caseload in our camps dropped by 60 per cent; in Tanzania, by 50 per cent. Reductions in excess of 30 per cent were also recorded in the population of concern in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Kenya. Levels of acute malnutrition have been reduced by up to 50 per cent among our beneficiaries in countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Myanmar and Nepal.

While we are still far from where we want to be, the implementation of these projects has allowed us to detect some other critical problems in water and sanitation, as well as high levels of anaemia amongst women and children

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in camps. The impact of this situation on the health and welfare of those people has been devastating. Based on these findings, and with additional savings, we have just approved an additional \$13.25 million water and sanitation project covering 16 countries, and the Budget Committee is now deciding on a very ambitious and innovative anaemia reduction programme. Anaemia in the two first years of life creates a devastating impact that never disappears, and anaemia in women giving birth is a major cause of death.

We have also taken steps to strengthen operations in which our field presence and activities have been systematically out of proportion with the needs of the people we care for. Yemen and the DRC are two recent examples.

A commitment to protection

Protection must remain at the centre of everything we do. We work with many people, but they all have one thing in common: their rights have been violated and must be restored. Let me draw your attention to the five specific protection issues that we have prioritized last year.

First, refugee protection in the broader context of international migration and mixed movements of people. We are working hard to operationalize the 10-Point Plan of Action, with the adjustments that were made based on our debates, in a number of locations, including the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden, the Atlantic Coast of West Africa as well

as South-East Asia. We will continue to do so, and in this respect give particular importance to our partnership with the International Organization for Migration.

Second, we have been engaged in a constant struggle to preserve protection space by promoting positive developments in asylum legislation and procedures. But this is a challenging task, as state concerns about security and irregular migration have led to the introduction of measures that represent a threat to refugee protection. While this is a global challenge, the establishment of the European Union asylum system, now entering its second phase, represents a crucial touchstone.

A third and increasingly central aspect of our work has been to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), with particular attention to the protection of women and girls. We have just completed a global evaluation of our work in this area, in order to establish a new and more effective concerted SGBV strategy. We have no illusions about the difficulty of this task. Forced displacement, extreme poverty, the breakdown of family structures and cultural prejudice all create the conditions in which SGBV becomes rampant.

Fourth, we have done our best to exercise our protection mandate more effectively in relation to statelessness, a largely unrecognized scourge which damages the life of millions of people throughout the world. I am pleased to

report that some progress has been made in this area, with encouraging developments now taking place in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.

Fifth, we have continued to strengthen our commitment to the protection of the internally displaced, assuming our responsibilities under the Cluster Approach. We will soon be commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which provide an important framework for the protection work of us all. We are also very encouraged by the preparation of an African Union Convention on Internally Displaced Persons, and hope that it will be ready for adoption at the AU Special Summit in Uganda next year. This will be a very important moment – it will be the first legally binding instrument addressed to the internally displaced, and I wish the African Union well in this important endeavour.

A commitment to durable solutions

Important progress is also being made in this area, and member States of the Executive Committee should receive a great deal of the credit for the actions they have taken for the different ways in which they have contributed to this objective.

In 2007, more than 700,000 refugees were able to repatriate on a voluntary basis, the large majority with UNHCR support, to countries such as Afghanistan, Burundi, the DRC, Liberia and Sudan. We did our best, sometimes against all odds, to make sure that returns took place in safety

and dignity. At the same time, a much larger number of internally displaced persons, some two million in total, were able to go back to their places of origin.

Second, local integration. Local integration has been described by one commentator as 'the forgotten solution'. Nevertheless, a recent study published by UNHCR has demonstrated that many thousands of refugees throughout the world have been able to benefit from it.

I would like to single out the generosity of the United Republic of Tanzania, which has offered the prospect of naturalization to more than 170,000 refugees who fled Burundi in 1972. Important steps have also been made in Latin America, where local integration projects have benefited over 160,000 refugees, internally displaced persons and local residents. Positive developments are also going on in the ECOWAS region.

I understand that a number of States continue to have doubts about local integration. But it is also fair to recognize the efforts that many refugee-hosting countries, even those that have expressed reservations, have made to ensure that refugees can live meaningful and productive lives during their time in exile.

In practical terms, that means enabling them to enter the labour market and establish livelihoods, to have access to education and vocational training, and to enjoy a positive relationship with local

communities. A failure to do so has negative consequences for the refugees themselves, but may also give rise to security concerns, and stands in the way of the successful reintegration of refugees upon their return.

Third, resettlement. The number of submissions made by UNHCR in 2007 rose to almost 100,000, an increase of more than 80 per cent when compared to 2006. And this positive trend continues. The global number of resettlement departures in the first half of 2008 was 50 per cent higher than in the same period the previous year.

More than 10,000 refugees from Myanmar have now left Thailand. Systematic departures of Bhutanese from Nepal have started. We have already referred more Iraqi refugees for resettlement this year than in the whole of 2007. And new resettlement countries are emerging. These include Brazil, Chile, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Portugal, Paraguay and Uruguay. A new emergency transit facility has been established in Romania.

But in terms of durable solutions, we all need to do more, and we need to do better. In many parts of the world, continued armed conflict and human rights violations obstruct the preferred solution of voluntary repatriation. Too few countries of asylum also give refugees a fully secure legal status and allow them to make use of their full productive potential. Too many people find themselves trapped in protracted refugee situations, in

conditions of extreme poverty and insecurity.

With the guidance of the Executive Committee, we are pursuing a special initiative to address five protracted refugee situations in South West Asia, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Eastern Sudan and the Balkans. We will examine its progress and debate the challenges of this issue at the next meeting of the Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

A commitment to sustainable reintegration

This is a persistent challenge that we cannot resolve alone. We are obliged to work at the critical transition between relief and development, and between conflict and peace. And these are areas in which the international community is struggling to offer effective support.

We have been actively engaged in advocacy efforts on this matter, bringing partners together in an attempt to create the conditions for sustainable reintegration. These partners include first of all the states concerned, but also the Peacebuilding Commission, the World Bank, other international financial institutions, as well as UN agencies, namely through the Delivering as One initiative.

On the surface, return and reintegration as a scenario sometimes looks good. For example, the number of Southern Sudanese refugees repatriating with UNHCR assistance so far this year - some 60,000 - has already outstripped the total for 2007.

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We have also supported the return of more than 75,000 refugees from Tanzania to Burundi in the past nine months – twice the number that returned in the whole of 2007. Large-scale returns have continued to Afghanistan, with some 250,000 opting to repatriate so far this year.

But let us take a hard look at the realities of return. In some cases, repatriation takes place as a result of security difficulties, of economic problems or even of restrictive refugee policies in countries of asylum. And in very few cases can we feel that conditions in the country of origin are entirely conducive to effective reintegration – a process which ultimately relies on the restoration of the bond between citizens and the State. UNHCR, moreover, will never have the capacity and resources to provide all the essential elements of a successful reintegration process: shelter, water, health, education, livelihoods and access to the rights of citizenship.

In our efforts to address this issue, we have recently undertaken thorough evaluations of our reintegration operations in Southern Sudan and Angola. And last month we issued a new reintegration policy. Our revised policy emphasises UNHCR’s strategic role in the reintegration process, the importance of partnerships, the need to build on the capacities of returnees and to support governments in reassuming their responsibilities towards their citizens. It also emphasizes the need for return and reintegration

to be built into national recovery strategies, development frameworks and peacebuilding processes.

This issue is exemplified by the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where we have seen a drop in the rate of refugee returns from an average of almost 6,000 a month last year to just 3,100 per month this year. And the main reason is not the absence of security, it is the absence of opportunities for returnees to earn a living and to access or pay for basic services such as education and health care. Indeed, I sometimes ask myself why refugees are still prepared to go home in such difficult circumstances.

A commitment to structural and management change

Ladies and Gentlemen, the centre of gravity of UNHCR’s work is in the field, often in remote locations. This reality is the basis of our structural and management change process. We need to become more effective, more efficient and more agile as an organization, responding to the needs of our beneficiaries. Let me identify the key actions we have taken in this area.

First, we have been streamlining our Headquarters functions, in order to direct our resources and energy to the field. At the beginning of 2006, we had 1,047 staff members based in Geneva. Today we are 747, 300 less. By mid-2009 this figure will be well below 700. This reduction was partly due to the establishment of the Global Service Centre in Budapest, and partly to rationalization – about 50/50.

As a result, there has been a reduction in the Headquarters budget in relative terms. In 2006, it stood at 13.9 percent of total expenditure. It fell to 12.2 percent in 2007 and will be in the region of 9 percent in 2008, including Budapest. Outposting to Budapest alone will generate savings of \$9 million a year as of 2009. Simultaneously, the proportion of staff costs in the Annual Budget has been reduced. It stood at 42.5 percent in 2006. We expect it to be 33.3 percent in 2009.

Despite these achievements, 26 percent of UNHCR’s international professional staff members are still based in Geneva. That is why we are continuing the Headquarters Review, with the intention of concluding it by the middle of next year.

We will be reconfiguring those Headquarters divisions which provide support to the field in the areas of protection and operations. At the same time, and at my request, the EU’s Anti-Fraud Office is undertaking a review of the Inspector General’s Office. We have commissioned the Fritz Institute to do a thorough analysis of our supply management function. And we are launching an external review of our Division of Information Services and Telecommunications.

Throughout this process of reform, we have ensured that the rights of staff are taken fully into account. Together and contrary to the initial expectations of many, we have found individual solutions for all staff members affected

by the Headquarters review. I remain committed to mitigating the impact of structural and management reform on our personnel.

Second, decentralization and regionalization. By locating decision-making closer to the field we are strengthening management accountability and ensuring that guidance is more closely related to operational realities. Following the previous establishment of regional offices in Europe, we have extended the same approach to locations such as Bangkok, Dakar and Pretoria. Parts of the Americas and Europe Bureaux will shortly move to Panama and Brussels. We are also in discussion with the Tunisian Government with regard to the creation of a regional platform to support our activities in the Maghreb.

Third area: a firm commitment to achieving and demonstrating results. We have adopted a new budget structure and we have a new resource allocation framework, the latter positively tested by the rapid response to the South Ossetia crisis. We have piloted the Global Needs Assessment and the Focus software. The Global Accountability Framework is currently being concluded. Together, these initiatives will create the foundations for a truly results-based management system.

Fourth area: we are making good progress in our field review. Based on a comprehensive survey, which included important inputs from our NGO partners, we will introduce new

policies on expanding our use of national professional officers, we will try to improve our work with implementing partners, and to attract more senior staff to deep field locations.

Fifth, we are embarking on a comprehensive set of human resources reforms. These will cover recruitment, contractual conditions, performance evaluation, promotions, rotation and career counseling. A new emphasis on training, linked to both individual career development and the needs of the organisation, will be supported by the establishment of a learning centre in Budapest. We will be consulting closely on all these matters with the Staff Council and the staff at large.

I have to say that it is not easy to reform the management of human resources within the UN system. Indeed, in UNHCR I have confronted the most dysfunctional career management procedures that I have encountered in the whole of my professional and political life. And of course the price for this dysfunctionality is paid first of all by the staff members themselves and by the people we care for. I will not give up the struggle to correct this unacceptable situation, and I count on the Executive Committee's continued support and guidance as we move into the next phase of the reform process.

A commitment to UN reform and a commitment to the integrity of UNHCR's mandate UNHCR is deeply engaged in both Humanitarian Reform and the Delivering as One initiative.

We see Delivering as One as a key opportunity to engage the entire UN system in support of durable solutions. We have been actively involved in the pilots and have played a catalytic role in the development of joint UN programmes targeting refugee-populated areas in Tanzania and now in Pakistan. We believe that the Delivering as One principles have great potential in many of our operations, and a recent example has been shown in Bangladesh.

Simultaneously, we have been assuming enhanced responsibilities for internally displaced persons within the Cluster Approach. We remain fully supportive of the Humanitarian Reform process and its objectives. While the Cluster Approach represents a major step forward in terms of humanitarian response we are concerned that it is still too process-heavy. We would like to see further simplification, fewer meetings, and more of a focus on results. We must also ensure that it respects the integrity and specificity of institutional mandates. Our recent experience has not disclosed any conflict between our extended role with internally displaced persons and our responsibilities for refugees. On the contrary, we have found important synergies in our work.

There has also been encouraging progress in strengthening humanitarian financing. The Central Emergency Response Fund already provided valuable support to a number of UNHCR operations. But our experience with country-level pooled funds has been more mixed.

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We have encountered two main unresolved obstacles. First, how to ensure that the needs of refugees, who are not viewed as a priority by national actors, are appropriately reflected in funding allocations? Second, how to ensure adequate funding for programmes covering multiple countries, such as regional repatriation operations, when pooled funding is determined at national level?

Our programme for the return and reintegration of Southern Sudanese refugees is a case in point. As I mentioned earlier, in 2008 we have assisted the return of more than 60,000 Sudanese refugees, returning home from seven countries of asylum. However, only \$2.9 million of a total UNHCR budget of \$63 million have been received from pooled fund allocations so far this year. This represents less than five per cent of the programme, even though the Sudan pooled fund involves some of our major donors that obviously did not contribute directly to UNHCR in this programme.

UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations also encounter complex dilemmas when engaging with integrated UN missions. We recognise their important role and have continued to work closely with them, particularly in the context of return and reintegration, such as with UNMIL in Liberia and UNMIS in Southern Sudan, and many others. UNHCR is also working in theatres where peacekeeping troops are contributing to the security of displaced people and humanitarians.

But having said this, I want to stress the need to preserve the autonomy of the humanitarian space and to safeguard the key humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, particularly in those countries where a durable peace settlement has not yet been reached. Indeed, we must take a particularly hard look at the meaning of ‘peacekeeping’ in situations where there is no peace to keep.

John Holmes and I have been working closely together on this issue and pursuing a common advocacy objective. We are fully engaged in the discussion of humanitarian space in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and consider this to be an area in which we enjoy privileged cooperation with OCHA and a very meaningful dialogue with the ICRC.

A commitment to partnership

We are determined to establish a full strategic partnership with our sister agencies in the UN system, as well as the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and the NGO community. Together, we are deeply involved in the Global Humanitarian Platform, a powerful alliance among equals, based on shared values and concerns.

Within the UN, I would like once again to recognize the cooperation we enjoy with the World Food Programme, which has averted disaster for many of our beneficiaries in these times of food crisis. Our alliance with the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement also grows stronger by the day, and I am

particularly pleased to welcome Mr. Jakob Kellenberger, the ICRC President, who has very kindly agreed to be our guest speaker.

I would also like to salute our NGO partners. This year’s UNHCR-NGO consultations attracted more than 200 agencies, almost half of them national NGOs. UNHCR currently has some 650 NGO partners and the expenditure channeled through them is now again increasing significantly.

We continue to develop partnerships with the private sector, a strategy that is now yielding some positive results. Contributions from private donors have increased from \$21.7 million in 2006 to an anticipated \$50 million this year. We are still in the beginning, but clearly making progress.

In terms of our commitment to partnership, I would also like to recall our current involvement in a peer review of accountability to beneficiaries – an initiative organized by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and involving nine agencies. We are particularly honoured that UNHCR was the UN organization invited to participate.

A commitment to staff security and welfare

Our staff is our most valuable resource. Maintaining a deep field presence exposes many of them to significant risks and places huge demands on their resilience. I would like to pay tribute to three UNHCR staff members who lost their lives since our last Executive Committee: Karim

Bentebal and Nabil Slimani in Algiers, and Mahamat Mahamadou in Chad.

We have continued to look for effective ways of minimizing the risks to which our staff are exposed, while trying to ensure – and it is not easy to do it in the UN system, let us be clear – trying to ensure that the management of security enables, rather than restricts, the delivery of protection and assistance.

While reinforced security is a regrettable necessity, it is impossible to protect our staff by means of barbed wire and barricades alone. We must work hard to ensure that humanitarian action and humanitarian organizations are perceived to be neutral and impartial. This is a very important challenge for the UN today.

The overwhelming majority of our offices are now compliant with UN Minimum Operating Security Standards, and the few exceptions are being addressed. We have strengthened our network of Regional Field Safety Advisors, and are updating and expanding our security training for staff. We are working closely with other agencies to implement the recommendations of the Independent Panel commissioned after the Algiers bombing.

Following the mission of the Deputy High Commissioner to Darfur and Chad last year, we have also taken decisive steps to improve in a more systematic way the conditions for staff in hardship duty stations. Guidelines on minimum standards were issued earlier this year, and set aside funds

which are being used to buy prefabricated buildings and to upgrade accommodation and other facilities, starting with three operations: Chad, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

A commitment to dialogue and cooperation with States

In 2007, I committed UNHCR to enhanced interaction with members of the ExCom. I consider that the Dialogue on Protection Challenges has already proved its worth for UNHCR, States and other stakeholders.

Many of you have been involved in a discussion on the preparation of this Committee's Conclusions on International Protection. I am heartened that you have reaffirmed the value of those Conclusions and have shown such commitment to improving the way they are established.

I would here like to extend my appreciation and gratitude for the excellent work done over the past year by the Chair of this Committee, Ambassador Boudewijn J. van Eenennaam of the Netherlands. I would like to say, Ambassador, that to work with you has been a privilege and an honour, and I would like to pay tribute to your unflinching energy and commitment. I would also like to thank the Vice-Chair, Ambassador Laura Thompson Chacón of Costa Rica. I would also like to offer a special word of thanks to Ms. Emina Tudakovic of Canada, who has served as a very able Rapporteur for the Executive Committee for two years.

Please also join me in warmly welcoming Benin, Luxembourg, Montenegro and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as new members of the ExCom.

I can assure you that our interaction with members of the Executive Committee will continue to be based on the principles of full transparency, trust and cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to end with two pressing concerns that I feel obliged to bring to your attention.

The first is that of funding for next year, 2009. While we are doing our very best to minimize costs, it is also true, and the Global Needs Assessment is proving this, that our budget does not allow us to meet the global needs of our beneficiaries. Again, looking at the present situation, with high food and energy prices, their welfare is seriously at risk. At the same time, we are asked to do more and more and to respond to greater and greater demands. We depend on members of the Executive Committee to continue to provide UNHCR with appropriate levels of support.

I fully recognize the challenges of the current financial environment and its impact on national budgets. At the same time, I must point out that the resources required to support the 31 million people we care for are very modest indeed when compared for instance to the sums being spent (and it is necessary to do so) to bring stability to the international financial system. It would be tragic if the funds

available to the humanitarian community as a whole and UNHCR in particular were to decline at the very time when the demands made upon us are increasing so dramatically.

I have already quoted from an eminent scholar, Mr. Francis Fukuyama. Now let me quote from an iconic musician, Mr. Bob Marley, who observed in one of his songs that “a hungry man is an angry man.”

As those words suggest, if we fail to meet the basic needs of the world’s poor then we can only expect more social and political turmoil in the years to come. I count on the wisdom of the Executive Committee members in this respect and I am sure that you will go on investing in protection, assistance and solutions for our beneficiaries. It is not only a matter of generosity, it’s a matter of enlightened self-interest.

Finally, we must use the next year to promote a serious and systematic debate about the international community’s response to the growing scale and complexity of forced displacement. And in doing so, let us ask ourselves some fundamental questions.

How will the issue of climate change and other adverse trends impact on patterns of forced displacement?

Can the international community address these challenges with the current legal and normative framework? Or are new norms, standards or instruments needed to govern the way in which forced displacement is addressed in tomorrow’s world?

Are the traditional principles of humanitarian action still relevant, and how do they relate to newer concepts such as ‘human security’ and ‘the responsibility to protect’?

Is the current architecture of humanitarian action adequate, or are new institutions, coalitions and partnerships required?

These questions form the basis of an important and necessary debate, in which leadership can only come from member States. I look forward to discussing them with you.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to conclude this lengthy presentation with a short and simple message. Only by thinking and acting together will we be able to restore the rights and meet the needs of the people that UNHCR has been mandated to care for – people who are in many respects the most vulnerable in today’s dangerous world. That is the challenge confronting us and that is the challenge we must address in this year’s meeting of the Executive Committee.

I thank you. ●



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