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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

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [78/185](#) on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. It updates the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-eighth session ([A/78/183](#)) and covers the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. The report was coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and includes information provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization.

* [A/79/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. Africa¹ continued to host large numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and others affected by conflict, persecution and generalized violence. New and ongoing emergencies triggered displacement internally and across borders. The conflict in the Sudan generated the world's largest and fastest-growing displacement crisis, with over 8.5 million people newly displaced since April 2023, when fighting broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces and paramilitary groups. Meanwhile, high levels of insecurity and violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia led to further large-scale internal displacement. Extreme weather events were also a major driver of forced displacement on the continent, while the risk of famine and starvation was significant.

2. By the end of 2023, the number of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Africa reached 45 million, representing 37 per cent of the global total, and up from 38.9 million the previous year. The total includes 31.4 million internally displaced persons, 7.8 million refugees, an estimated 1 million stateless² persons and 746,000 asylum-seekers. The majority of refugees hosted in the region came from South Sudan (2.3 million), the Sudan (1.4 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (926,500), the Central African Republic (750,700) and Somalia (682,000). Uganda was the largest host country on the continent, providing protection and assistance to nearly 1.6 million refugees, followed by Chad (1.1 million), Ethiopia (979,800) and the Sudan (922,500).

3. Compounding these complex emergencies were an array of protection challenges, including exploitation and abuse, trafficking, forced recruitment into armed groups, xenophobia, child labour and the continued use of detention in the context of asylum. Gender-based violence remained prevalent across operations, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, disproportionately affecting women and girls. Mixed movements of refugees and migrants also affected the region. Enhancing protection responses for people on the move through a route-based approach was therefore a priority.

4. Despite increasing displacement, solutions were also found, including through voluntary repatriation, resettlement and complementary pathways, and measures to facilitate local integration. The largest number of refugee returns were to South Sudan (527,200), primarily from the Sudan, followed by Nigeria (31,700), Burundi (26,700), the Sudan (17,200) and the Central African Republic (14,500).

5. Global and regional initiatives played a crucial role in improving protection for forcibly displaced persons, enhancing burden- and responsibility-sharing for countries hosting large number of refugees and facilitating durable solutions. The second Global Refugee Forum, co-hosted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Switzerland in December 2023, saw numerous pledges to advance the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees across the region. With respect to statelessness, a major achievement was the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa.

¹ In the present report, "Africa" refers to "sub-Saharan Africa".

² The estimate is based on data reported to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees by Governments and collected from other sources. The number is likely to be much higher, as not all countries report data on statelessness.

II. Operational landscape

A. Subregional situation

6. East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region hosted some 5.2 million refugees and asylum-seekers and 16.7 million internally displaced persons. In the Sudan, escalating violence spread from the capital to other parts of the country. As a result, the number of Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers reached 2 million by mid-2024, almost all of whom were hosted by neighbouring countries. The Sudan faced a dire humanitarian situation, with widespread hunger and acute food insecurity. It represented the largest displacement situation in Africa, with over 9 million internally displaced persons, while also hosting nearly 1 million refugees (the majority from South Sudan, followed by Eritrea and Ethiopia). South Sudan continued to experience intercommunal violence. Nearly 2.3 million South Sudanese were refugees in neighbouring countries and 2 million were internally displaced. At the same time, South Sudan received over 588,400 refugee returnees, alongside some 165,000 Sudanese refugees since the outbreak of the war in the Sudan.

7. Somalia continued to be affected by conflict, climate-related shocks, including drought and floods, outbreaks of communicable diseases and weak social protection mechanisms. Almost 3.9 million people remained internally displaced, with a further 1 million Somali refugees outside the country, mostly in the region. The security situation and counter-terrorism operations presented a challenging environment in which to deliver protection, assistance and essential services, and affected the prospects of return.

8. Southern Africa hosted 6.8 million internally displaced persons and nearly 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers. The complex crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique were the main drivers of forced displacement in the region. Meanwhile, protracted refugee situations persisted in Angola, the Congo, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a resurgence of fighting in the east exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Some 2.8 million people were newly internally displaced, while 1.8 million internally displaced were estimated to have returned and 6.3 million remained displaced.

9. West and Central Africa hosted 7.9 million internally displaced persons and 2.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers. Political instability, new and protracted conflicts and insecurity were the main causes of displacement, while increased competition over resources due to the effects of climate shocks, poverty and inflation compounded the situation.

10. The Sahel continued to face a complex humanitarian crisis, including due to violence perpetrated by non-State armed and violent extremist groups. In Mali, armed conflict intensified, increasing displacement within and across borders. In the Niger, border closures and sanctions contributed to a deteriorating humanitarian situation, while the number of internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso surpassed 2 million. The region also endured protracted displacement and conflict around the Lake Chad basin. The crisis in the Sudan drove refugees into the Central African Republic and Chad, where humanitarian needs outstripped response capacity.

B. Mixed movements

11. A complex interplay of conflict, poverty and extreme weather events continued to cause mixed movements of refugees and migrants across the continent and beyond. Those on the move were subjected to serious human rights violations and abuse, including gender-based violence, exploitation, extortion, kidnapping, trafficking and

arbitrary detention. The increasingly restrictive responses by some States to mixed movements raised protection concerns.

12. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants risked their lives travelling on routes that extended from the East and Horn of Africa and West Africa towards the North African Atlantic coast, and across the central Mediterranean Sea to Europe, as well as from the East and Horn of Africa to South Africa. The main countries of origin of those arriving by sea in Europe included Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and the Sudan. Nationals from Burkina Faso submitted six times as many asylum applications to European Union member States in 2023 as compared with 2022, from nearly 1,000 to 6,600. In 2023, irregular arrivals by sea to Europe via the central and western Mediterranean, and west African maritime routes increased to over 207,000, with over 4,000 lives reportedly lost at sea. In 2024, as at 30 June, the number of irregular arrivals stood at 50,000.

13. UNHCR worked with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to implement a route-based approach, which aims to strengthen protection, assistance and solutions along key routes, in all subregions. Efforts were made to strengthen outreach to those on the move in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger. The Telling the Real Story³ project, with accounts from refugees and asylum-seekers from Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia, contributed to countering misinformation and empowering those on the move to make informed decisions.

14. Sudanese refugees continued to arrive in Libya following the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan. As at 30 June 2024, nearly 40,900 Sudanese refugees were registered in Libya, more than 20,000 of whom arrived since April 2023. The African Union, the Government of Rwanda and UNHCR continued evacuating refugees and asylum-seekers from Libyan detention centres to emergency transit centres in the Niger and Rwanda.

C. Climate-related disasters

15. Across Africa, the devastating impacts of climate change-related shocks on displaced populations resulted in loss of lives and livelihoods, damaged health and infrastructure, drove onward movements, exacerbated protracted displacement and amplified assistance and protection needs. Millions were adversely affected by extreme weather events, including the fourth strongest El Niño phenomenon on record, as well as drought, erratic rainfall, flooding and high temperatures. While the effects varied across the continent, these weather events led to water scarcity, diminished crop yields and subsequent food shortages, acute hunger, internal and cross-border displacement, and the proliferation of disease. They also disrupted access to essential services, cut off humanitarian access to people in need and inflamed tensions between communities dependent on natural resources.

16. In East Africa, torrential rain, flooding and landslides, and prolonged and severe drought exacerbated displacement, including in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. Around 5.2 million people were affected and over 2 million were displaced. In 2024, flooding during the rainy season displaced more than 230,000 people from their homes over a five-day period in Burundi, Kenya, Somalia and the United Republic of Tanzania, leading to outbreaks of cholera and measles. Tens of thousands of displaced people, including nearly 20,000 refugees in the Dadaab settlement in Kenya, were uprooted again after their homes were washed away.

³ See www.tellingtherealstory.org/en/.

17. The El Niño event contributed to severe drought and extreme heat across Southern Africa. Just 20 per cent of the expected rainfall was received, with catastrophic consequences for people, livestock and wildlife. National disasters were declared in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, while large parts of Angola, Botswana, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa were also affected. Meanwhile, heavy rains and flooding in other areas displaced thousands in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, and tropical storm Gamane resulted in a national disaster in Madagascar.

18. Investing in data for targeted and forward-looking climate action remained critical. Climate-risk data helps to strengthen preparedness, evidence-based programming and strategic planning. Informed by such evidence, the new regional climate action strategy of UNHCR is being implemented in climate-vulnerable areas of displacement in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Niger. A preliminary environmental impact assessment was conducted by UNHCR for five new refugee settlements in eastern Chad to mitigate environmental risks and degradation. In Cameroon, UNHCR and partners are implementing climate adaptation measures in areas hosting refugees and internally displaced persons, including reforestation, climate-smart agriculture and resilient shelter construction.

III. Protection

A. Refugees and asylum-seekers

19. Governments across Africa generally kept their borders open to refugees and asylum-seekers, providing protection to millions. Notably, when conflict erupted in the Sudan, Ethiopia applied on a prima facie basis the broader refugee definition of the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa to persons fleeing the Sudan. Uganda remained at the forefront of protecting and assisting refugees, while implementing progressive policies that exemplify the objective of enhancing refugee self-reliance contained in the Global Compact on Refugees.

20. Kenya brought its legal framework further in line with international and regional legal standards by adopting regulations implementing its Refugees Act of 2021. Côte d'Ivoire adopted its first national law on asylum, promoting the non-penalization of illegal entry, facilitating family reunification, issuing biometric identity cards and reiterating essential rights. Chad signed the implementing decree of its 2020 asylum law, which resulted from the country's commitments made at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019. This is expected to strengthen the framework for protecting refugees and asylum-seekers and ensure respect for their civil and socioeconomic rights.

21. All sub-Saharan countries are signatories to the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. In 2024, Sao Tome and Principe ratified the convention, bringing the total number of ratifications to 43, leaving five countries yet to ratify it. Forty-five countries are States parties to either the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) or its 1967 Protocol or both. However, 21 States parties maintain reservations and declarations and do not consider themselves to be bound by some important provisions.

22. At the same time, a number of developments raised concern, including the continued use of detention in the context of asylum. The contraction of asylum space led to more than 1,600 incidents of refoulement, although this is considered an underestimate and reflects only the officially documented cases known to UNHCR. UNHCR strengthened engagement with States and regional organizations to ensure

adherence to the principle of non-refoulement and to advocate alternatives to detention.

23. Inconsistent access to national asylum procedures was observed in some countries, leaving unregistered and undocumented asylum-seekers unable to meet basic needs and remaining vulnerable to refoulement. A reduced willingness to grant refugee status to certain populations on a prima facie basis and a reticence to operationalize fair and efficient individualized asylum procedures resulted in backlogs, affecting access to rights and solutions. UNHCR continued to work with States to improve their asylum systems and processes.

B. Internally displaced persons

24. Due to their proximity to the frontlines of conflict, internally displaced persons were particularly vulnerable to human rights violations and insecurity. Displaced women and girls, persons with disabilities and older persons were disproportionately affected. The deteriorating situations in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan demonstrated the protection challenges faced by internally displaced persons.

25. In Burkina Faso, fighting between security forces and armed groups led to numerous incidents affecting internally displaced persons and other civilians. In one incident in February 2024, over 220 civilians, including 56 children, were reportedly killed. In May 2024, three sites for internally displaced persons in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, were bombed following intense fighting between rebel groups and government forces. This resulted in the killing of at least 14 internally displaced persons, mostly women and children, and further displacement. OHCHR condemned such indiscriminate attacks and assaults by armed groups against displaced civilians and called for accountability.

26. The Sudan is home to the world's largest internal displacement crisis. More than 6 million Sudanese people have been newly internally displaced since fighting broke out in April 2023. At least 2,000 civilians are known to have been killed, although the actual number is believed to be higher. OHCHR received reports of internally displaced persons being killed in ongoing fighting in the Sudan and of direct attacks against those fleeing conflict, particularly in Darfur. Nearly half of the country's 49 million people required humanitarian aid, and the country experienced outbreaks of disease.

27. Despite these developments, several positive legal and policy measures were adopted to support protection for internally displaced persons. Sao Tome and Principe ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and Chad progressed with the implementation of its newly adopted law on internal displacement. Burkina Faso finalized a draft law on internal displacement, which is awaiting formal adoption, as well as an action plan covering the period 2023–2027 to enhance access to documentation.

28. The Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement and the Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement, established under the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, have supported a shift to Government-led, development-financed solutions for internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. The Government of Nigeria has finalized state action plans to resolve displacement for over 4 million internally displaced persons and returnees in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. With support from UNHCR, the first poverty assessment to include internally displaced persons was carried out by the World Bank in the Central African Republic.

C. Stateless persons

29. There are currently around 1 million stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality in sub-Saharan Africa, including 931,000 in Côte d'Ivoire alone, although the actual number of stateless persons is likely to be much higher. Millions are also at risk of statelessness. Several important regional and national initiatives were adopted to help prevent and reduce statelessness.

30. The African Union adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. The Protocol, which addresses legal barriers that prevent stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness from exercising their right to a nationality, is open for ratification and will enter into force with the fifteenth ratification by a State.

31. UNHCR and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region organized an experts' conference that galvanized support from development partners to address statelessness. A new study by those partners highlighted the risk of statelessness among refugees in a protracted situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda and recommended legal and policy reforms to ensure their access to citizenship.

32. Action was undertaken at the national level to address statelessness, including accession by the Congo and Sao Tome and Principe to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In February 2024, Senegal naturalized some 310 Mauritanian refugees at risk of statelessness. Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania both took measures to reduce statelessness. Subsequently, in Kenya, 7,000 members of the Pemba community were recognized as nationals and issued documentation, while in the United Republic of Tanzania, more than 3,000 persons at risk of statelessness in Zanzibar were granted Tanzanian nationality.

D. Women and girls

33. Forcibly displaced women and girls face heightened risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Worsening socioeconomic situations and food insecurity contribute to harmful coping strategies, including child marriage. Various initiatives were undertaken to enhance protection and prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including creating safe spaces and promoting access to education for girls. Local women-led organizations play an important role in conducting outreach, providing assistance to survivors and women at risk, and contributing to the well-being and safety of women and girls.

34. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNHCR, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners played a significant role in protecting displaced women and girls. In East Africa, UNHCR strengthened gender-based violence prevention and response services, including through partnerships with women-led organizations. UNFPA improved the collection of forensic evidence for survivors of gender-based violence, distributed dignity kits and promoted community-based protection networks. UN-Women established safe spaces, provided legal aid and advocated gender equality.

35. Pooled funds managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs targeted women and girls, with the Central Emergency Response Fund allocating \$227.3 million, or 72 per cent of total funding, to gender equality projects. Assistance from the Central Emergency Response Fund in the health and protection sectors focused on mitigating, responding to and preventing gender-based violence, reaching over 1.2 million people in Africa.

E. Children, adolescents and young people

36. Humanitarian crises in the region significantly affected children, adolescents and young people. Forcibly displaced and stateless children, including unaccompanied and separated children, were at risk of abuse, exploitation, child marriage, child labour, trafficking, abduction and recruitment into armed groups. The United Nations and partners targeted assistance towards at-risk children and cooperated with Governments to strengthen the role of national systems in protecting children, including in mixed movements.

37. Under the PROSPECTS partnership, which aims to improve social protection and economic and social inclusion for forcibly displaced and host communities, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and UNHCR facilitated the inclusion of displaced children and young people in national protection systems in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda.

38. UNHCR and UNICEF implemented a regional peacebuilding programme for young people across five countries in East Africa, strengthening coordination with humanitarian, development and peace actors. The initiative aims to enable young people to become catalysts of positive change in their communities, while in their countries of asylum, and upon return.

39. Education and vocational training, as well as sport programmes, enhanced protection for displaced children, adolescents and young people in numerous countries. In Kenya, the World Food Programme (WFP) facilitated skills-building, mentorship and sports for peace programmes for 20,600 young people. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR extended protection to displaced and stateless children through education. In the Niger, UNFPA provided displaced adolescent girls with education on sexual and reproductive health in safe spaces. Also in the Niger, UNHCR and partners led an inter-agency initiative to support married girls and girls at risk of child marriage and gender-based violence.

IV. Meeting humanitarian needs

A. Emergency response and constraints

40. Insecurity hampered relief efforts and affected the humanitarian space in several countries, particularly where there was a presence of non-State armed groups, such as in the Lake Chad basin and Central Sahel. The African Union and its Peace and Security Council joined the United Nations in calling for unrestricted humanitarian access and respect for international humanitarian law.

41. In East Africa, the United Nations and partners faced significant security challenges. Over 270 incidents of violence, involving looting, harassment and attacks against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities, were recorded. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, over a dozen humanitarian workers were kidnapped in the first half of 2024.

42. Indiscriminate attacks and assaults by armed groups on refugees fleeing conflict, including in border areas, were observed. In South Sudan, for example, an attack against a UNHCR convoy transporting Sudanese refugees from Abyei to a safer location led to the killing of two refugees. The incident highlighted the challenges that humanitarian organizations face in helping refugees to reach safety, as well as the responsibility of Governments to ensure the security of refugees and humanitarian personnel.

43. Following the outbreak and rapid escalation of conflict in the Sudan, emergencies were declared in the Sudan, in response to the internal displacement situation, and in the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan to manage the refugee influxes. Humanitarian airlifts brought essential items to the operation, and emergency deployments were scaled up.

B. Food and nutrition

44. Across the continent, conflict and the impact of climate shocks affected the food and nutritional situation of forcibly displaced persons. In addition, the increase in food prices caused by the decline in food production due to drought, coupled with inflation and conflict, left many families extremely vulnerable.

45. In Southern Africa, the El Niño-induced drought severely affected food security and the nutritional situation of millions of people. Approximately 49.5 million people in the Sahel and West Africa required emergency food and nutrition assistance. Funding shortfalls resulted in the reduction of food aid by up to 70 per cent, with high levels of acute malnutrition, stunting and anaemia reported. WFP, UNHCR and partners took action to mitigate the impact of ration cuts and advocated sufficient resources, self-reliance and the inclusion of vulnerable refugee households in national social protection systems.

46. According to UNHCR surveys, in some parts of Africa, 1 in 10 refugee children under the age of 5 suffer from acute malnutrition, and nearly half under the age of 5 have stunted growth and micronutrient deficiencies. Priority interventions linked to the inter-agency Global Action Plan on Child Wasting commenced in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Sudan.

C. Education

47. Escalating conflict and crises across the continent affected the education sector. In the Sahel, over 2.2 million children were affected by the closure of 10,000 schools. In Burkina Faso alone, 818,000 children were affected by over 5,300 school closures. In Southern Africa, the gross enrolment rates for refugees and asylum-seekers in primary, secondary and tertiary education remained below the global average. UNHCR and partners supported education for nearly 100,000 refugee children in Southern Africa (48 per cent of whom were girls), an increase of 11 per cent compared with 2022. In the East and Horn of Africa, over half of school-aged refugee children were deprived of education opportunities.

48. The conflict in the Sudan resulted in a year-long disruption to education for Sudanese nationals and refugees hosted in the country. The arrival of refugees in host countries, including the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan, strained national education systems.

49. At the second Global Refugee Forum, numerous African countries made pledges on including displaced children in education systems, and several adopted favourable

laws and policies. However, insufficient resources, insecurity, teacher shortages and structural barriers persist, and transition rates to secondary and tertiary education remain low, with refugee girls disproportionately affected. Even with enabling policy environments, progress is hampered by system fragility and constraints, including inadequate financing.

50. Despite these challenges, several initiatives are enhancing educational opportunities for displaced populations. In line with its theme for 2024, “Educate and skill Africa for the twenty-first century”, the African Union promoted equitable and inclusive educational policies. UNICEF worked with partners and ministries of education to improve learning conditions for displaced children across drought-affected regions, while UNHCR focused on improving school enrolment, infrastructure and teacher training, and provided higher education scholarships.

D. Health

51. The provision of health services remained challenging, due to large population numbers, budgetary constraints and the absence of infrastructure. In East Africa, fragile health systems made it challenging to deliver adequate services. In some countries, refugees, particularly in urban areas, faced cost barriers to access health care.

52. The conflict in the Sudan damaged health infrastructure, impeding access to life-saving services. Over 70 per cent of health facilities in conflict-affected areas no longer functioned and outbreaks of communicable diseases were observed. The flow of refugees from the Sudan placed significant strain on the capacity of the national health systems of host countries, in particular Chad and South Sudan. In Chad, support from the World Bank facilitated the inclusion of refugees in the national health system.

53. Women and girls faced barriers in accessing health services, including sexual and reproductive health care and services for survivors of gender-based violence. In response, UNFPA, UNHCR and partners coordinated mobile and static medical clinics and established safe spaces for community-led initiatives. UNFPA facilitated safe referrals for pregnant women and promoted sexual and reproductive health care in refugee-hosting districts in Uganda. In Mozambique, the UNFPA “mobile brigade” model aided displaced populations during disruptions to health systems.

54. Fragile health systems were affected by outbreaks of disease, hampering service delivery in displacement situations in several countries. Measles outbreaks affected children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 311,500 cases and 5,800 deaths were reported. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR supported Government-led measles and polio catch-up campaigns, achieving childhood vaccination coverage of over 95 per cent. Refugees were included in national roll-outs of vaccines in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and South Sudan.

55. ILO and UNHCR advocated and supported the inclusion of refugees in national social health protection systems. Advances were made in Kenya and Rwanda, where more refugees were enrolled in national health insurance schemes. Nevertheless, financing for inclusion and payment of premiums remained challenging.

56. Floods exacerbated disease outbreaks and damaged or led to the closure of health facilities in Burundi, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. UNHCR, WHO and partners collaborated with health ministries to include displaced populations in national programmes during epidemics. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IOM, WHO and regional economic communities implemented the One Health model, an integrated approach to

preventing and responding to health threats at the human-animal-environment interface. In the Central African Republic, UNICEF extended free essential health care to vulnerable displaced and returnee populations.

57. Several initiatives were carried out to tackle HIV/AIDS in displacement settings. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNHCR and WFP conducted assessments and promoted integrated HIV responses in the national plans of several countries. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UNHCR strengthened cross-border collaboration on tuberculosis, as well as access to tuberculosis diagnostics, treatment and care in refugee-hosting areas in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda. In West Africa, HIV screening and awareness-raising campaigns conducted by IOM and UNHCR reached over 1,300 displaced persons.

58. Mental health and psychosocial needs among refugees and internally displaced persons in the region are high, both in emergencies and protracted situations. The inter-agency minimum service package for mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings was introduced in Chad and Ethiopia. The package supports the integration of mental health and psychosocial support within multiple sectors and entails cooperation with national Governments.

E. Cash-based interventions

59. Cash continued to be effective in responding to the needs of displaced persons, improving their living conditions and well-being, and remained the preferred modality of assistance according to post-distribution monitoring. UNHCR reached 1.4 million individuals in 23 countries in Africa with cash assistance. Over 30 per cent received cash through mobile money accounts, contributing to digital inclusion, strengthening local markets, and empowering displaced persons, including women.

60. In East Africa, UNHCR prioritized cash-based interventions in emergency responses, reaching 900,000 refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. UNHCR and WFP cash-based interventions in West and Central Africa enhanced protection and financial inclusion. Post-distribution monitoring from 10 countries in West and Central Africa indicated that cash was used for food in 92 per cent of households interviewed. UN-Women focused on social protection and cash transfers for displaced women and girls, while WFP provided unconditional cash transfers to 2.6 million displaced persons in East Africa in 2023. In the first quarter of 2024, WFP cash assistance reached 420,000 refugees in the same subregion, a 42 per cent increase compared with the first quarter of 2023. In Chad and Ghana, UNICEF provided cash assistance to 4,500 displaced households.

61. In Southern Africa, insecurity and limited resources hindered the systematization of cash-based interventions as a standard modality. However, cash-based interventions were implemented in Botswana, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, reaching 80,700 individuals.

V. Accountability to affected populations

62. Accountability to affected populations remained a priority. Two-way communication with communities and efforts to strengthen complaints and feedback mechanisms were enhanced. In Chad, UNHCR established an inter-agency complaints mechanism, through which displaced persons could make confidential

reports. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNFPA deployed experts in accountability to affected populations to coordinate with specialists working on the prevention of gender-based violence to address this key issue. This model was extended to Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Sudan. Inter-agency standards for collective feedback mechanisms were developed and piloted by UNHCR in Burundi, Ethiopia and Somalia.

63. UNHCR has established multilingual help sites in 17 countries in Africa, and an additional 12 are under development, where people can access information on essential services and providers. Sixteen UNHCR operations have hotlines for forcibly displaced persons to provide feedback on humanitarian services provided, report any concerns and receive information on assistance.

64. Community feedback mechanisms remained a key component of the commitment of WFP to accountability to affected populations, which helps to ensure that the people who need assistance receive it safely, in full and without interference. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique, WFP instituted a toll-free inter-agency hotline, through which affected populations can provide feedback on the adequacy of humanitarian interventions and raise concerns.

65. In 2023, the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated \$2.3 million to promote accountability to affected populations through collective humanitarian feedback mechanisms in five operations in Africa, which mainly target women, girls and young people. In 2024, a dedicated envelope of \$4 million was allocated by the Central Emergency Response Fund to support collective accountability to affected populations in four countries in Africa. In South Sudan, the first South Sudan Humanitarian Fund standard allocation for 2024 required all proposals to reflect community engagement results and channelled a significant proportion of funds directly to local and national humanitarian actors, in particular women-led organizations. In the Niger, a dedicated envelope of \$2 million from the Regional Humanitarian Fund for West and Central Africa targeted local actors with an operational presence in crisis areas, prioritizing national and local non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

VI. Efforts to address the root causes of displacement

66. Initiatives intended to address the root causes of displacement include the African Union's Master Road Map for Silencing the Guns by 2030 and Agenda 2063. The appointment of the African Union Special Envoy on the Prevention of Genocide and Other Mass Atrocities was significant, providing vital leadership to avert the crime of genocide on the continent. The African Union and the regional economic communities also played an important role in promoting democracy and respect for the rule of law.

67. The African Union helped to facilitate the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement in Ethiopia, which had a positive impact on the return of internally displaced persons. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported that endeavour through its multi-partner peace support and stabilization programme.

68. The African Union and regional organizations engaged in coordinated peace efforts to address various crisis situations. They include the Expanded Mechanism for the Resolution of the Sudan Crisis, the implementation of a programme on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in the Lake Chad basin as part of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region, and various

initiatives aimed at addressing the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

69. UNDP collaborated with a range of actors to address the root causes of displacement from a development angle, recognizing that the magnitude and complexity of forced displacement cannot be addressed through humanitarian responses and traditional recovery processes alone. Areas of focus included the environment, governance and the rule of law, and poverty and inequality, with projects in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan.

VII. Durable solutions

70. Resolving displacement can take place through a combination of solutions, including voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as through complementary pathways to protection. For internally displaced persons, solutions include return and local settlement. Although new and protracted conflict in Africa meant that progress towards solutions was limited, there were nevertheless several important developments.

A. Voluntary return

71. UNHCR facilitated the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa where conditions allowed returns to take place in safety and dignity. Spontaneous returns also took place in some countries, without UNHCR support. Most occurred in contexts that were not entirely conducive to return and were likely not sustainable.

72. In the East and Horn of Africa, some 581,100 refugees returned to their countries of origin, the majority to Burundi and South Sudan and smaller numbers to Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia and the Sudan. The return of over 527,200 refugees to South Sudan, primarily from conflict-affected Sudan, was three times higher than during the previous year. Most returns were from neighbouring countries, including the Sudan (386,800), Ethiopia (111,100) and Uganda (22,300). Over 26,700 Burundian refugees returned home, most from the United Republic of Tanzania. Some 17,200 Sudanese people repatriated to their country of origin.

73. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR supported the voluntary repatriation of over 14,400 nationals of the Central African Republic, mainly from Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, nearly 2,100 Cameroonians voluntarily repatriated from Chad. UNHCR assisted over 13,000 Cameroonian refugees to reintegrate upon their return home, including through cash assistance, and peaceful coexistence initiatives were undertaken in the country. UNHCR advocated the finalization of tripartite legal frameworks for voluntary repatriation in the Lake Chad basin region, as well as between the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries. Some 31,700 Nigerians returned spontaneously to Borno State.

74. In Southern Africa, 1,800 refugees returned home, mainly to Angola and Zambia. Some returns were not sustainable, however, particularly due to ongoing violence in areas of return in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

B. Resettlement and complementary pathways

75. In East Africa, UNHCR submitted resettlement cases for 35,800 refugees, including 25,000 people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The number of resettlement departures in 2023 (almost 28,000) was more than double the number the previous year (13,000). Since the establishment of the emergency transit mechanism centre in Rwanda in 2019, 2,000 refugees and asylum-seekers have been evacuated from Libya and 1,400 resettled to third countries.

76. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR submitted resettlement cases for 4,100 refugees, with 3,100 departing on resettlement to third countries. Of the 4,200 people evacuated from Libya to the emergency transit mechanism centre in the Niger, established in 2017, 4,000 were resettled in third countries.

77. In Southern Africa, the cases of 9,100 refugees with heightened protection needs were submitted for resettlement, and 3,700 departures took place, despite administrative delays. Challenges in obtaining exit permits for resettlement, especially for private sponsorships, and barriers to family reunification persisted.

C. Local integration

78. UNHCR advocated local solutions for long-staying refugees in West and Central Africa, including Ghanaians in Togo, Mauritians in Mali, Senegalese in the Gambia and Togolese in Ghana. Côte d'Ivoire provided documentation for nearly 300 former Ivorian refugees who opted to remain as residents in Liberia to facilitate their legal integration. Senegal pledged to naturalize 9,000 Mauritanian refugees who had opted for local integration, issuing a decree in January 2024 to naturalize 300 of them. In Southern Africa, Angola issued renewable two-year residence permits to 4,200 former refugees from Liberia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone to support their local integration.

VIII. Inclusion and resilience

79. Several African countries pursued progressive local settlement and inclusive approaches. At the second Global Refugee Forum, Ethiopia and Kenya committed to transitioning refugees from camps to integrated settlements, with support from development partners. The Shirika plan of the Government of Kenya and the Ugandan agenda for the local settlement of refugees are key to promoting self-reliance and livelihood opportunities.

80. The United Nations collaborated with an array of partners, including bilateral development actors and international financial institutions, to promote the socioeconomic inclusion and resilience of displaced populations. Focus areas included gender equality, livelihoods and peaceful coexistence.

81. The World Bank is investing nearly \$4.7 billion globally to support countries hosting refugees, with a significant portion allocated to 16 African countries through the International Development Association Window for Host Communities and Refugees. This substantial financial commitment aims to alleviate the burden on these countries and advance inclusion and solutions to forced displacement.

82. UNHCR played a pivotal role in coordinating with bilateral development actors, including the European Commission, the Belgian and French development agencies, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, to enhance investments in host and return areas.

83. The Directorate-General for International Partnerships of the European Commission launched a project for the reintegration of returnees in Burundi, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, while maintaining support for resilience and inclusion in asylum countries. It also supports a regional youth peacebuilding programme in five countries affected by the South Sudanese refugee crisis.

84. The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and UNHCR supported the inclusion of displaced persons in national systems in Mozambique. The Belgian development agency included displaced populations in its development cooperation programmes in Burkina Faso and Uganda, while the French development agency launched resilience projects for refugees and host communities in Chad.

85. The Japan International Cooperation Agency supported Uganda to transition from humanitarian response to development-oriented approaches in refugee-hosting areas, providing technical capacity and financial support.

86. UNHCR and the World Bank's Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement approved projects to improve data collection and foster inclusion in Burkina Faso and Cameroon. UNHCR also collaborated with the International Finance Corporation on an energy and agribusiness project in Chad. Collaboration with the African Development Bank helped to build the resilience of forcibly displaced persons across the continent. In Southern Africa, UNHCR partnered with the African Development Bank and the Southern African Development Community on inclusion and strategies to improve livelihoods and resilience.

87. The United Nations worked with and in support of Governments on various development-oriented projects to promote resilience and foster inclusion. In Chad, for example, WFP, UNHCR and the Government implemented an initiative to rehabilitate 100,000 hectares of agricultural and pastoral land to promote the self-sufficiency of 500,000 farmers and herders. In Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda, ILO promoted skills matching and contributed to creating 10,400 jobs for refugees and host community members.

88. In West and Central Africa, ILO contributed to economic growth and social cohesion through women's entrepreneurship and cooperatives. IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP worked together to reinforce the resilience of vulnerable host community households in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. UNHCR initiated a multi-year joint programme with FAO and WFP on livelihoods and resilience for 286,000 people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 2,600 in Eswatini.

IX. Global Compact on Refugees and regional processes

89. Positive developments to advance the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees in the region were observed. At the Global Refugee Forum, 24 African States made policy pledges in areas such as education, health care, labour, inclusion in statistics and national climate adaptation plans, transition from camps to sustainable settlements, asylum, and ending statelessness.

90. Twenty United Nations organizations made a common pledge to include refugees in their plans; promote refugee inclusion in national plans, data sets, budgets and systems in support of host country pledges; and ensure access to decent work. United Nations country teams also made commitments that are expected to benefit 17.2 million refugees, returnees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons in 14 countries⁴ in the region.

⁴ Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, the Niger, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia.

91. Pledges in support of host countries in Africa were submitted by a range of stakeholders, some through thematic multistakeholder pledges. For example, the Poverty Alleviation Coalition pledged to support 105,000 households in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia to improve self-reliance through the “graduation approach”, with financial support of \$215 million from States, foundations and the private sector.

92. New and existing regional platforms were instrumental in galvanizing political commitments and advocating solutions to forced displacement situations with support from the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States and IGAD.

93. In November 2023, the United Nations participated in the African Union’s annual humanitarian symposium, which was focused on advancing effective and inclusive humanitarian action in Africa through implementation of the 2022 Malabo Declaration and the pledges made at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019. The African Union subsequently pledged at the second Global Refugee Forum, held in 2023, to establish an African humanitarian agency and work with States on the inclusion of forcibly displaced persons in national systems.

94. IGAD, through its support platform on forced displacement, made pledges on climate action and durable solutions for refugees, returnees and host communities. IGAD also held a regional review conference on the Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities in the IGAD region to ensure follow-up.

95. The Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform, launched in November 2023, prioritized solutions for displaced Central Africans, in line with the 2022 Yaoundé Declaration on solutions in the context of forced displacement related to the Central African Republic crisis.

X. Funding

96. Despite the enormous humanitarian needs and the fact that Africa continued to bear a high burden of the forcibly displaced population globally, funding has continued to fall short. The *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024* outlines the need for \$18.4 billion to cover humanitarian needs in 18 African countries. However, only \$5.2 billion, or 28 per cent, has been received.

97. The African Union established a new humanitarian fund following the extraordinary humanitarian summit and pledging conference held in 2022 in Malabo, where \$177.3 million was pledged towards the operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency.

98. At the International Humanitarian Conference for the Sudan and its neighbours, held in April 2024 in Paris, donors pledged 2.2 billion euros for humanitarian and development activities. The high-level pledging event for the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia, which also took place in April 2024, raised \$630 million, \$370 million short of the \$1 billion needed.

99. The Central Emergency Response Fund allocated \$319.2 million for life-saving activities in 24 African countries, with \$210.5 million dedicated to addressing displacement crises, aiding over 10 million forcibly displaced people. The country-based pooled funds managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs allocated \$544.9 million to 10 African countries. By 2024, all country-based

pooled funds in the region had women's organizations represented on their boards. In 2024, UNHCR operations in Africa required \$3.8 billion, which has been funded at approximately 35 per cent.

100. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to lead innovative approaches for cross-border humanitarian crises through its regional humanitarian funds. Simultaneous allocations were launched by the Regional Humanitarian Fund for West and Central Africa in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger to address displacement and food insecurity in common border areas. Building on the success of this first Regional Humanitarian Fund, the Office established three new regional humanitarian funds in 2024, including for East and Southern Africa.

101. To combat the underfunding of local women's organizations, the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund provided over \$11.9 million to 96 organizations in 10 African countries. A quarter of those organizations were led by forcibly displaced people.

XI. Conclusion and recommendations

102. **I am deeply concerned by the growing level of forced displacement in Africa, including as a result of armed conflict and climate-related disasters. The number of new and ongoing emergencies is outpacing the capacity of humanitarian actors to respond, and more concerted efforts are needed to address this. In order for Africa to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, decisive action is necessary to tackle the root causes of forced displacement and to ensure that economic and social development is inclusive. Greater resources are also needed to support African States in their efforts to protect and assist forcibly displaced persons.**

103. **With this in mind:**

(a) **I call upon all parties to armed conflict to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, including by protecting civilians and preventing serious human rights violations;**

(b) **I urge State and non-State armed groups to facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to refugees, internally displaced persons and other victims of conflict; to take all appropriate steps to protect humanitarian personnel; and to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum;**

(c) **Recalling that the principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, is considered a rule of customary international law, States are reminded of their obligation to respect the right to seek asylum and to keep their borders open to those fleeing conflict and persecution;**

(d) **Recognizing the continued relevance and value of the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, I call on States to apply its provisions, including recognition of refugee status in the context of events seriously disturbing public order;**

(e) **Preoccupied by the growing effects of climate change, and the interlinkages with displacement, I call for coordinated efforts to protect the most threatened displaced communities, equipping them to prepare for, withstand and recover from climate-related shocks; for the development of policies and programmes to strengthen environmental protection, restoration and climate adaptation; and for measures to reduce the impacts of the humanitarian response on the environment;**

(f) I applaud African States that have developed solutions strategies for internally displaced persons and encourage them to bolster efforts to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement, including through implementation of relevant commitments outlined in my Action Agenda on Internal Displacement;

(g) I reiterate my support for the African Humanitarian Agency and welcome the decision by the African Union to select Uganda as host of this important initiative. I encourage all States to support operationalization of this endeavour;

(h) I welcome initiatives to address mixed movements of refugees and migrants in the region through a protection-centred and routes-based approach, with the objective of reducing human suffering and saving lives;

(i) Recalling the commitment of States members of the United Nations to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities, key to addressing the root causes of displacement, I recognize the vital role of development actors in achieving these outcomes and reiterate the importance of leaving no one behind, including forcibly displaced persons;

(j) I encourage all relevant stakeholders to prioritize access to food and the provision of education and essential services, including mental health and psychosocial support, in displacement settings;

(k) Recognizing the vital role of women and girls in decision-making, I encourage their effective and meaningful participation in local governance structures and in measures aimed at conflict prevention, peacebuilding and social cohesion;

(l) I urge all stakeholders to support efforts towards social and economic empowerment for displaced women, including through access to learning and training opportunities that enhance self-reliance;

(m) I call on humanitarian and development actors to integrate a gender and age dimension in their programming in order to effectively address the needs of refugee women, girls and boys, and vulnerable populations, including older persons and persons with disabilities;

(n) I stress that displaced women and children should be protected from all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse. Efforts to prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence in displacement settings must be prioritized, and survivors must have access to critical services;

(o) I commend the States members of the African Union for adopting the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. I encourage its swift ratification, domestication and implementation. I call for an end to gender discrimination in nationality laws that disproportionately affect women and children;

(p) I strongly encourage States and other relevant stakeholders to implement the Global Compact on Refugees, recognizing the significant role that host countries in Africa play in protecting and assisting forcibly displaced persons. Measures to ease pressure on host countries and facilitate burden- and responsibility-sharing are vital;

(q) I applaud pledges made at the second Global Refugee Forum to advance protection and solutions and urge all stakeholders to translate swiftly these commitments into tangible action and to maximize opportunities along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus;

(r) Concerned by the critical shortfall in funding for life-saving humanitarian operations in Africa, I call on donors to ensure predictable and sustainable financial support. I welcome efforts to expand contributions from private sector partners and recognize the critical role they play in supporting economic inclusion.
