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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 [77/199](#) 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-seventh session ([A/77/313](#)) and covers the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. 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 and the World Food Programme.

* [A/78/150](#).

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I. Introduction

1. Despite conflict prevention and resolution efforts, and progress made through the Silencing the Guns by 2030 initiative of the African Union, conflict and violence continued to pose challenges across Africa.¹ In 2022, existing and new conflicts significantly contributed to perpetuating humanitarian crises and generating further displacement in Africa.

2. Furthermore, the overall slowdown in growth and poverty eradication experienced by the continent in 2019 has been worsened by the deterioration of the global economic and financial situation, which in turn has been directly affected by the armed conflict in Ukraine and the lingering effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. In some parts of the continent, climate change further aggravated food insecurity, straining water and other natural resources and compounding the drivers of displacement and vulnerabilities of affected populations.

3. As of the end of 2022, Africa was hosting 1 out of 5 refugees globally and over a third of people living in internal displacement worldwide, owing to conflict, persecution and generalized violence. Africa was home to some 41 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons, as well as returnees who were still in need of assistance (7 million refugees, over half a million asylum-seekers, 28 million internally displaced persons, over 1 million stateless persons and 4.2 million returnees). The new displacement crises – such as the one resulting from the conflict in the Sudan – had added to the magnitude of the humanitarian needs.

4. Despite the worsening displacement situation, by mid-2023 only a quarter of the financial requirements were funded to meet effectively current and emerging humanitarian needs. Among the critically underfunded operations were those in low-income and middle-income countries with large numbers of forcibly displaced persons, including Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the Sudan and Uganda.

II. Drivers of displacement

5. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons has steadily increased over the past decade. This is largely owing to the persistent conflicts across the continent, aggravated by disasters, including floods, drought, famine and environmental degradation. In 2022 alone, 9 million people were newly internally displaced.²

6. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the most affected country in Africa, with armed groups attacking civilians in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces. Intercommunal tensions also persisted in Mai-Ndombe and Kwilu Provinces in the west of the country. Hence, a significant new displacement occurred in the country, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons to 5.96 million.

7. In North Kivu Province, fighting between January and March 2023 forced some 28,500 people to cross into Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

8. Intercommunal violence in some areas of South Sudan forced about 18,245 people into Uganda in the first half of 2023. The refugee situation in South Sudan remained the largest such situation in Africa, with 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda. Following a five-month truce,

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

² The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre is the source of all data on internal displacement.

the conflict in Ethiopia intensified from July 2022 to November 2022, increasing the internal displacement numbers from 2,716,121 to 2,727,733.

9. As at 30 June 2023, the conflict in the Sudan had compelled nearly 473,927 Sudanese and non-Sudanese nationals to seek protection in neighbouring countries. It had also forced more than 142,962 non-Sudanese nationals – mainly South Sudanese (130,319) – to return to their countries of origin under adverse conditions and had led to some 2.1 million people being displaced internally, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons to 3.78 million.

10. Extremist groups orchestrated violent acts, mainly in the Sahel region, the Lake Chad Basin, Mozambique and Somalia. Between September and December 2022, Mali and the Niger received some 11,500 people fleeing the violence in Burkina Faso, while 30,000 Malian nationals fled to Burkina Faso and the Niger. Over 65,000 nationals of Burkina Faso sought refuge in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Over 360,000 nationals of Burkina Faso were displaced between September and December 2022, increasing the total number of internally displaced persons to some 2 million people. Incursions and attacks in the northern regions of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo were also reported. As a result, new waves of internal displacement were reported in Benin and Togo. In Mozambique, violent extremism displaced over 1 million people internally. Countries bordering the Lake Chad Basin also experienced internal displacement owing to the ongoing conflict with armed groups.

11. Climate change compounded the vulnerabilities of forcibly displaced populations, in particular in East Africa, the Horn of Africa and West Africa. In the Horn of Africa, severe droughts and floods rendered land unusable, causing food insecurity and forcing people to flee.

12. The interlinkages between climate change and conflict, in particular in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions, are becoming increasingly apparent. Desertification and shifting rainfall patterns altered the routes of cattle-herding communities, bringing them across farmland during the harvest season and causing conflict between herders and farmers in various parts of the continent.

III. Addressing root causes, preventing and resolving conflicts

13. Emerging and persistent conflicts, which continued to generate and aggravate displacement situations, drew concerted and collective interventions carried out by various stakeholders, including, but not limited to, those mentioned below. In accordance with its flagship Silencing the Guns 2030 initiative as part of Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union continued to prioritize preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa. In November 2022, its mediation efforts led to the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, thus ending the two-year conflict.

14. The African Union and regional entities also strengthened conflict prevention and management mechanisms. The African Union Peace and Security Council has been mobilized to support stabilization efforts in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including through the quadripartite summit held in Luanda on 27 June. Through the summit, key regional actors supporting the country were brought together, including the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The African Union Peace and Security Council also engaged in several situations, including in the

Central African Republic, Somalia and South Sudan, as well as in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, despite the lack of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding.

15. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic encouraged dialogue between the Government and armed groups to facilitate the latter's re-engagement in the 2019 political agreement for peace and reconciliation. In another region, the third High-level Conference on the Lake Chad Region was convened in the Niger on 23 and 24 January 2023, which helped to mobilize resources for locally driven efforts to combat the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin.

16. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are developing peacebuilding programmes in hotspot areas to address subnational violence and intercommunal conflicts. The Mission conducted good offices engagements and conflict prevention efforts with other stakeholders and funded 60 quick-impact projects to rebuild police stations, prisons, judicial tribunals and health-care facilities, as well as other initiatives to reinforce the implementation of the revitalized peace agreement.

17. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) studied the causes of conflicts between farmers and herders in Chad, concentrating on the right to food following incidents of intercommunal violence in the country. The International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted peace and conflict analysis in Cameroon and Mauritania to understand existing or potential grievances regarding access to resources, employment and decent working conditions among forcibly displaced populations and host communities. In the north-west region of Nigeria, the peacebuilding and dialogue component of the UNDP prevention facility reached over 104,700 people, with some 44 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries being young people, while 30 per cent were women.

IV. Protection

A. Refugees and asylum-seekers

18. Overall, access to territory in which to seek asylum was respected in Africa. In some countries, however, legal, policy and administrative decisions curtailed access to asylum and weakened the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers. While many countries grant *prima facie* refugee status recognition, in some parts of Africa refugee status determination procedures remain slow. This has put over 200,000 asylum-seekers in limbo and made them increasingly exposed to risks, with many forced to resort to negative coping strategies.

19. Several countries took progressive measures to strengthen and increase asylum space. In November 2022, Benin enacted a new asylum law, while other countries made progress towards reforming their asylum systems. In Cameroon, the Government developed a strategy to reduce the accumulation of asylum applications and was committed to enhancing fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures. Some refugees benefited from the established exemption procedures before the cessation of refugee status took effect for over 1,500 Ivorian refugees in Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Togo.

20. SADC adopted a regional road map for enhancing national asylum systems, aimed at reducing the backlog of asylum claims in the region by December 2023. Efforts by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) contributed to the protection of vulnerable populations from protection risks in some countries. In Angola, South Africa and Zambia, implementing best

interest procedures led to the improved inclusion of refugee children in national systems.

21. In alignment with the Global Compact on Refugees, Kenya launched the Shirika Plan, which was aimed at transforming refugee camps in the country into integrated settlements.

22. Refugee women and girls faced increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation and abuse in all subregions. In several refugee operations, a combination of drought, insufficient funding and reductions in food rations further exposed women and girls to extreme coping mechanisms. The humanitarian community worked hard to mitigate the risks of gender-based violence by enhancing prevention and response mechanisms, providing life-saving services to victims and survivors, including women and girls at risk.

B. Internally displaced persons

23. As of the end of 2022, there were 28 million internally displaced persons in Africa. The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains the country hosting the largest number of internally displaced persons, most of whom reside in settlements and camps. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported an increase in attacks on internally displaced persons camps in Ituri Province. At least six sites were affected in 2022, with the attacks killing at least 126 people, including children, and injuring over 60 others. In addition, some 40 people were killed in a camp for internally displaced persons in the same province in June 2023.

24. Widespread allegations of sexual violence against internally displaced persons, in particular women and girls fleeing conflict, were reported. In Somalia, for example, OHCHR reported an increase in abductions of women in groups and in sexual violence since January 2023. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia confirmed eight incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involving internally displaced women, including rape and gang rape. Response to such incidents was limited by fear of retaliation, stigma, underreporting and restricted access, as well as low levels of arrest and accountability for perpetrators.

25. There were also reports of arbitrary arrest and detention of internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic and Somalia. The forced recruitment of minors by non-State armed groups in camps for internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic was also a concern. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported incidents of forced returns, relocations and evictions in the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Somalia. In addition, explosive remnants of war presented a danger for internally displaced persons, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners reported protection concerns affecting internally displaced persons living in displacement sites in some countries.

26. There were, however, positive developments in certain countries. Burkina Faso, Chad, the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan instituted processes to incorporate into national law the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Furthermore, Nigeria adopted a national policy on internal displacement in 2022.

27. The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement engaged Member States, the United Nations system, development actors and other key stakeholders to explore pathways to durable solutions for internally displaced persons in nine countries in Africa. The Steering Group on

Solutions to Internal Displacement and the resident coordinator system supported the implementation of the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and the Special Adviser's work on solutions across Africa through collaborative partnerships.

28. In Mozambique, UNDP employed a robust community-based approach to design and implement development projects that would enhance solutions for internally displaced persons and support host communities. Despite numerous challenges, UNMISS and its humanitarian partners assisted the Government in protecting civilians in internally displaced persons sites. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the national defence forces established protective environments for civilians, enabling State authorities, social services and humanitarian and development actors to return. Similar efforts were carried out by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, in partnership with the national authorities, leading to a greater presence of State authorities in the northern and central regions of the country, despite the complex security situation in the centre and in the cross-border area among Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

C. Stateless persons

29. Statelessness remains a key concern in Africa, as in other regions of the world. Efforts were adopted at the global, regional and country levels to eradicate statelessness. Within the framework of the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR supported efforts to eliminate statelessness.

30. In June 2023, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community adopted a declaration on durable solutions for refugees in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. The declaration includes an agreement to facilitate nationality pathways for those born in host countries, which will support efforts to prevent statelessness and reduce risks of statelessness. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and ECCAS adopted, at the technical level, a regional model law on statelessness determination, the protection of stateless persons and the facilitation of their naturalization.

31. Liberia signed an act to amend the Aliens and Nationality Law in August 2022, thereby removing gender-discriminatory provisions that had prevented women from conferring nationality to their children on an equal basis with men. In October 2022, Benin adopted a law on the status of refugees and stateless persons that regulated the protection of stateless persons and provided for the creation of a national body responsible for statelessness determination procedures. The Government of Kenya officially recognized members of the Pemba community as Kenyan citizens in January 2023 and instructed relevant authorities to issue them with identification documents. The Pemba had lived in Kenya for decades but were nonetheless stateless. In February 2023, Nigeria signed into law an act to protect stateless migrants by establishing a statelessness determination procedure and facilitating access to appropriate solutions.

32. SADC adopted a road map on the eradication of statelessness (2022–2024), so as to establish safeguards in nationality laws to prevent statelessness, protect the rights of stateless persons and reduce and eradicate statelessness in the region. Meanwhile, the Congo, Eswatini, Madagascar and Namibia were in the process of reforming their nationality laws.

D. Returnees and initiatives to support them

33. Opportunities for voluntary return as a durable solution remained limited, as few crises on the continent were resolved. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR worked with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to reintegrate over 5,000 returnees. Thus far, over 316,000 Ivorian refugees had returned since the political crisis of 2010–2011.

34. The World Food Programme (WFP) implemented resilience and livelihood activities for returnees in Nigeria to facilitate their socioeconomic inclusion and integration, while the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joined forces to address malnutrition in northern Nigeria by empowering returnee women to produce and distribute nutrient-dense, locally blended cereal and fish-based meals. These efforts notwithstanding, security remained challenging for returnees in some areas. Following an attack by armed groups in the northern Nigerian State of Plateau in November 2022, 10 returnees were killed, and many others were injured.

35. In East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, a joint programme carried out by IOM, UNHCR, IGAD and the Platform on Disaster Displacement provided entrepreneurship skills training to 120 returnees, out of whom 105 launched businesses. In Ethiopia and South Sudan, through the Pockets of Hope Initiative, UNHCR also worked to enhance the living conditions and employment opportunities for returnees and local communities, strengthen local systems and develop capacity and access to services.

36. FAO implemented a crisis agriculture livelihoods response plan to help Mozambican returnees, internally displaced persons and host communities restore their agriculture, livestock and fishing livelihoods. The Government of Mozambique also provided plots of land to internally displaced persons to enhance their agricultural livelihoods. Through agricultural and non-agricultural income generation initiatives implemented in Burundi, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) supported 66,000 women and girls and 6,300 men, including returnees, members of ethnic minority groups and others.

37. Almost 21,000 Burundian refugees voluntarily returned to Burundi, bringing the total number to over 230,000 returns since 2017. In the face of challenges relating to the sustainable return and reintegration of refugees in Burundi, including insufficient resources, the Government of Burundi and UNHCR convened a round table in November 2022 to further support the sustainable reintegration of Burundian returnees. The main outcomes included recommendations for improving coordination and leadership to enhance those efforts, the transformation of the existing joint refugee return and reintegration plan into a more inclusive and multi-year strategy, and recognition of the need to develop a comprehensive regional road map for better planning, increased resource mobilization and the systematic inclusion of returnees.

E. People travelling in mixed movements

38. Africa has seen an increase in the number of persons who travel within broader mixed migratory movements, such as from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to South Africa, as well as to North Africa or Europe. These movements have been marked by human rights violations in both transit and destination countries. Departure from countries of origin is attributed to violence, insecurity, conflict and poverty.

39. IOM and UNHCR supported countries with data collection, protection services and assistance for people in mixed movements. In West Africa, the joint engagement

framework between IOM and the Governments of the Niger and Senegal was finalized, providing referral procedures for migrants seeking protection. Between October and December 2022, more than 11,000 people on the move were screened, of whom more than 4,000 were referred to protection services. Such procedures ensure appropriate profiling and referral for persons travelling in mixed movements from across the continent to North Africa and Europe. Most of them use the central Mediterranean route, including through Libya and the Niger, risking death, arbitrary detention, torture, rape, enslavement and other inhumane acts. Between January and April 2023, 77 per cent of people arriving in Europe used this route, with most departing from Libya.

40. Following the commitment made at the African Union-European Union Summit in February 2022, the principals of the joint African Union/European Union/United Nations task force on stranded refugees and migrants in Libya met in Brussels in March 2023 and agreed to engage the Libyan authorities to address the issue. The emergency voluntary departure programme continued to be used to evacuate vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers from Libya to other countries, including the Niger and Rwanda. The United Nations is represented in this endeavour by IOM and UNHCR.

V. Meeting humanitarian needs

A. Humanitarian response capacity and constraints

41. In several African countries, armed conflict and activities of some parties to conflict made it difficult for aid to reach affected populations and for humanitarian workers and assets to be protected. This was the case in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan in particular.

42. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, humanitarian access was difficult, partly owing to the increased frustration expressed by local communities towards humanitarian actors. Violence against humanitarian personnel also impeded aid delivery in East, West and Central Africa. Armed groups kidnapped, injured and killed several aid workers in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and the Sudan.

43. The widespread looting of aid convoys and attacks on aid facilities and assets highlighted the need to protect civilians during armed conflict. Between 15 April and 30 June, the World Health Organization verified 50 attacks on health-related facilities and services in the Sudan. These included attacks on health-care facilities, health personnel and supplies and the looting of offices and warehouses. In Burkina Faso, commercial resupply convoys under escort to besieged areas were attacked by armed groups, decreasing vital deliveries in the affected areas. In the Central African Republic and Mali, aid distribution sites were looted by armed groups, depriving hundreds of people of assistance. In South Sudan, incidents of looting occurred during attacks on humanitarian convoys and facilities.

44. Despite those challenges, humanitarian partners stayed and delivered, even in areas with extreme constraints. In some locations, they were aided by increased donor flexibility. For example, in South Sudan, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund allocated \$19 million to prevent major flooding in internally displaced persons camps in Unity State, including the strengthening of protective dikes around vital infrastructure to maintain access for communities and humanitarian actors.

B. Basic social services

Food and nutrition

45. In 2022, food insecurity affected the health and nutrition status of some 4.2 million refugees and 10.65 million internally displaced persons in several countries in Africa. Standardized expanded nutrition surveys conducted in 17 sites in the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe between 2019 and 2022 revealed a high prevalence of stunting among children, reaching 76 per cent in some locations. In response, WFP expanded its operations to those in critical need, providing in-kind and cash transfers, emergency school meals and treatment and prevention of malnutrition to about 21 million people, including 6 million displaced persons in West Africa. In the face of food insecurity and funding constraints, WFP focused on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to save and change lives. In East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, UNHCR distributed cash grants to 1.2 million affected people, of whom 86 per cent were refugees, while in Southern Africa some 55,400 individuals were assisted with cash to meet food and nutrition needs.

Education

46. Insecurity, poor infrastructure and limited resources hindered access to quality education for refugees, returnees and displaced persons. About half of all out-of-school children in displacement settings, some 36 million of them in emergencies, were in eight countries in Africa, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Nigeria. Pupil-per-teacher ratios were markedly higher for refugee children and young people than for nationals in several countries. While refugee enrolment rates at the secondary and tertiary levels rose slightly in West and Central Africa, enrolment rates at the secondary level stood at just 16 per cent for boys and 14 per cent for girls in Southern Africa, far below the global average of 37 per cent. Enrolment rates at the tertiary level stood at a mere 3 per cent. In the Horn of Africa, the drought affected school attendance and enrolment rates.

Water, sanitation, hygiene and health

47. Humanitarian partners in the region, such as in Chad, the Central African Republic and Kenya, provided to asylum-seekers and refugees malnutrition screening, immunization, treatment of common ailments, antenatal care, deworming and referrals for those requiring admission or specialized care. Water, sanitation and hygiene remained critical to the refugee response in the region, in particular in operations plagued by outbreaks, such as measles, Ebola and cholera outbreaks. Furthermore, underfunding left millions at risk of diseases associated with a lack of potable water and a shortage of sanitation facilities.

48. In Cameroon, UNICEF reached 440,000 individuals with communications about the risks of disease in cholera-affected regions, while responding to cholera outbreaks and flooding in Nigeria. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided critical assistance and support to vulnerable populations, distributing 64,700 dignity kits containing sanitary and menstrual hygiene supplies and other relief items to some 1.9 million people in East and Southern Africa. As part of the emergency response in countries affected by the situation in the Sudan, UNHCR and its partners worked to improve water, sanitation and hygiene services, despite funding gaps undermining their operational capacity to address the most critical needs of refugees in the Central African Republic, Chad and South Sudan.

49. In Kenya, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) helped to integrate HIV programming into the emergency response in Kenya and ensured the

availability of comprehensive HIV services in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi, Mali and Rwanda. With other United Nations partners, UNAIDS implemented capacity-building workshops in Africa, which helped to address gaps in HIV prevention and response in humanitarian settings.

Energy and environment

50. UNHCR developed a climate action plan and carried out activities in Africa to align its response with environmental, energy and waste management interventions. Initiatives included tree planting, land rehabilitation, environmental awareness-raising, improved waste management and the transition to renewable energy. In Uganda, FAO, UNHCR and the Government developed a comprehensive forest landscape management plan for the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement to promote a sustainable supply of fuelwood, timber and non-food forest products, restore degraded land and conserve biodiversity. In Nigeria, IOM promoted briquettes as an alternative energy source to reduce environmental damage and address cooking energy shortages, distributed fuel-efficient stoves to 2,000 households and trained 100 people on briquette production.

C. Accountability to affected populations

51. Humanitarian operations in the region had fully functional complaints and feedback mechanisms in place, which showed a commitment by humanitarian actors to use their power responsibly by empowering forcibly displaced and stateless populations and host communities, including by being held accountable by the latter. Feedback mechanisms and anti-fraud messaging were tailored to specific operational contexts, including through communications in the local language.

52. A key example was the activation of the UNHCR complaint and feedback mechanism across the areas and neighbourhoods hosting internally displaced persons in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, as part of the camp coordination and camp management cluster response. In September and October 2022, about 2,000 complaints related to various sectors were received, most of which had been lodged by women (58 per cent). UNHCR, in its operations in West and Central Africa, implemented digital solutions to enable forcibly displaced populations to gain access to information and be involved in decision-making.

53. WFP established feedback mechanisms to enhance community participation and manage complaints, thereby increasing accountability and enhancing the quality of the response for programmes implemented in East and West Africa. In East Africa, safe, accessible and reliable communication channels were provided to over 95,800 people, while in Central Africa participatory assessments involving 40,000 participants were conducted in the Central African Republic and other countries. OHCHR increased its awareness-raising campaigns and the monitoring of reporting mechanisms in South Sudan.

54. In East and Southern Africa, UNFPA supported initiatives to improve accountability and protect displaced populations from sexual exploitation and abuse and related risks. One noteworthy example was the recruitment of personnel to reinforce such efforts, promote system-wide initiatives and implement victim-centred approaches to protection and assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

VI. Supporting and empowering communities

A. Women and girls

55. Women and girls were exposed to various gender-specific threats, including greater levels of violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, food insecurity and limited access to vital assistance, often relying on precarious sources of income. To help ensure their safety and support their empowerment, the United Nations and partners provided educational programmes, skills training and livelihood opportunities. They also ensured the inclusion of women in decision-making processes, while working to prevent and address gender-based violence and other protection risks.

56. UN-Women and UNFPA provided assistance and services to women-led organizations, conducted security meetings for women in refugee centres, educated young girls about healthy life choices, coordinated activities to promote protection against gender-based violence and enhanced employment opportunities for women and girls. Over 26,000 women and girls were assisted with the means to increase their employability and independence. Support was also provided to 520 women-led organizations, which contributed to increased numbers of women reporting incidents of gender-based violence and the prevention of more incidents of domestic violence, unplanned pregnancies and child marriages. UNHCR and UN-Women supported prevention and response efforts in Kenya, while UNFPA implemented a digital literacy initiative and a forensic laboratory in Nigeria to help survivors of gender-based violence gain access to justice.

57. UNFPA and UN-Women provided sexual and reproductive health services to women and girls in West and Central Africa and in Uganda, benefiting some 464,000 women and girls. Through its second chance education project, UN-Women helped 2,000 women and girls in Cameroon gain access to education, gain employment and become entrepreneurs. In Kenya, UN-Women championed inter-agency coordination efforts to develop a gender-sensitive action plan in refugee camps.

58. FAO constructed and equipped 13 fish processing centres in Nigeria, which benefited 350 women, while ILO conducted training programmes for women's entrepreneurship and agricultural cooperatives in Cameroon. ILO empowered forcibly displaced populations through its partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities – an initiative through which training and resources were provided to improve agricultural practices and productivity in Ethiopia, Kenya and the Sudan. Through the programme, 1,000 farmer groups were trained in improved agricultural practices and gained access to better seeds, while 700 cooperative members, including women, benefited from efforts to increase productivity for forage and honey.

B. Children, adolescents and young people

59. Armed conflict, forced displacement, climate change and other emergencies continue to increase the number of crisis-affected children and young people worldwide, with some 54 per cent of the 224 million crisis-affected children living in sub-Saharan Africa. Humanitarian partners provided protection and services to affected children, adolescents and young people in the region.

60. In Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania, UNICEF invested in development and humanitarian interventions by which it delivered quality pre-primary education to 132,900 children through formal and non-formal programmes targeting children of forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

In Burundi, UNICEF provided 32 child-friendly spaces that benefited 99,711 children of forcibly displaced populations and in host communities.

61. UNICEF promoted birth registration and immunization campaigns in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad and Ethiopia. The campaigns have increased birth registration rates and the issuance of birth certificates to thousands of children, including refugee and internally displaced children, adolescents and young people. In Burundi, a late birth registration campaign conducted jointly with the Government facilitated the issuance of birth certificates to 239,000 children, including 32,900 returnee children. In Ethiopia, the birth registration campaign increased birth registration rates by 43 per cent, including for refugee children, exceeding the goal by 18 per cent. Collaboration between UNICEF, UNHCR and UNDP in Chad resulted in a road map for accelerating universal birth registration and issuing birth certificates to refugees and internally displaced persons, with 131,700 birth certificates already issued.

62. Across the region, UNHCR and its partners also worked to protect children from violence and exploitation, collaborating with UNICEF to enhance child protection systems by implementing alternative care arrangements and multisectoral assistance for at-risk children. UNHCR and UNICEF also worked with the East African Community and IGAD to strengthen child protection systems and cross-border and inter-agency coordination with regard to child protection in the region.

63. UNHCR, UNICEF and UNFPA supported adolescents and young people in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Refugee adolescents from Africa participated in global forums discussing issues affecting them, including the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges and the Transforming Education Summit. Furthermore, in Burkina Faso, UNICEF accelerated the mainstreaming and engagement of young people and adolescents in programme delivery. Among others, 300 young people led a back-to-school campaign in the country's six regions, reaching about 45,000 people.

64. ILO partnered with the Ministry of Education of Kenya to improve policies for technical education and training, including recognizing prior learning. The finalization of a new policy framework will allow for refugees' prior learning to be recognized, opening opportunities to pursue further education and career options.

65. In the Central African Republic, UNFPA provided peacebuilding and conflict resolution training to young people, and a toy design competition was launched in Burundi to improve stimulation for children with severe acute malnutrition. Selected toy models will be designed, produced and piloted in 2023 in three health-care facilities providing outpatient care and treatment for children affected by severe acute malnutrition. UNFPA also used sports to prevent gender-based violence and improve the physical and mental health of young refugees in Kenya through a project called "Play 2 Protect", which has benefited over 1,700 adolescents.

VII. Responsibility-sharing

A. Funding

66. Between July 2022 and June 2023, the Central Emergency Response Fund allocated \$117.9 million to support life-saving activities in nine African countries affected by displacement. Of the total amount, \$41.9 million was allocated from the rapid response window, while \$76 million was allocated from the underfunded emergencies window. The Central Emergency Response Fund was crucial in addressing acute humanitarian needs resulting from new displacements triggered by violence in Mozambique, Somalia, the Sudan and other countries. It also addressed

critical gaps in life-sustaining assistance for those in protracted displacement contexts in Cameroon, Nigeria, Uganda and other countries.

67. Through the country-based pooled funds, \$250.8 million was allocated in response to humanitarian crises in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Furthermore, in 2022, 73 per cent of people assisted through the funds were affected by conflict-related displacement.

68. In 2023, UNHCR operations in Africa required \$3.4 billion, approximately 32 per cent of the organization's global budget. Almost 64 per cent of the allocation for UNHCR operations in Africa was needed to address ongoing emergencies in East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region. As at 30 June 2023, the budget for operations in Africa was only 25 per cent funded.

B. Partnerships and collaboration

69. In Southern Africa, the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme of Excellence and Targeting Hub introduced a call to action for refugees to improve food security, nutrition, self-reliance and participation in government programmes, while UNDP and UNHCR developed, through the Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement working at the country-level for Mozambique, a joint strategy to address the priority needs of internally displaced persons and refugees affected by the crisis.

70. UNHCR, in partnerships with WFP, the African Development Bank and the German Agency for International Cooperation and in collaboration with the World Bank, helped over 2,000 households through livelihood projects across Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. UNICEF, UNFPA and the Danish Refugee Council collaborated with the aim of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by improving safe reporting channels and providing timely assistance.

71. In East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, FAO launched a multi-year ecosystem restoration and sustainable forestry management programme in Djibouti, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, collaborating with local and national government stakeholders and UNHCR. The project will directly benefit 29,500 displaced persons and enhance the resilience of livelihoods and access to energy, nutrition and food in displacement contexts.

72. In September 2022, ILO and the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development signed an agreement to provide skills development and livelihood opportunities for 200 persons with disabilities, including 100 refugees and 100 host community members, in select cities of the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia. Through the partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, ILO has worked with various stakeholders, including Governments, social partners, academia and civil society, to improve access to education, employment and protection for refugees and host communities affected by forced displacement. In East Africa, the European Union Directorate-General for International Partnerships and UNHCR developed a regional programme to support the 2023–2024 Solutions Initiative for the Sudan and South Sudan.

73. In West and Central Africa, UNHCR collaborated with UNDP and other stakeholders to advance the agenda of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, focusing on the regional strategy for stabilization. To further the localization agenda, an extensive mapping exercise was carried out to identify key local civil society organizations in

the central Sahel. This partnership enabled closer collaboration on stabilization initiatives in the region.

74. The Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement, a collaboration between UNHCR and the World Bank, launched a flagship forced displacement survey in South Sudan in February 2023. This initiative will allow UNMISS, the United Nations country team, humanitarian and development partners and South Sudanese local authorities to accurately assess the living conditions of host communities and refugee populations. It will also provide data and evidence to enable stakeholders to design inclusive programmes for refugees and displaced communities.

C. Support platforms

75. Through the Global Compact on Refugees, support platforms were conceived as a framework for engagement by the international community to help host countries and countries of origin galvanize support for large-scale and protracted refugee situations. UNHCR supports the operationalization of the Yaoundé Declaration on solutions in the context of forced displacement related to the Central African Republic crisis, signed in April 2022, which led to the creation of a Central African Republic situation support platform. In line with the provisions of the Yaoundé Declaration, national action plans were also developed to address the displacement crisis in the Central African Republic.

76. Through its Resilience Hub for Africa, UNDP supported the IGAD Support Platform on Forced Displacement and the IGAD Solutions Initiative for the Sudan and South Sudan. This support has been crucial in helping to address the root causes of conflict in the region. UNDP is leading the design of a cross-border peacebuilding intervention, which is aimed at promoting peace and social cohesion among South Sudanese refugees returning home, internally displaced persons and others. The conflict in the Sudan has, however, had a negative impact on the implementation of the above-mentioned Solutions Initiative.

D. Regional and subregional approaches

77. In addition to efforts at the country level, continental and regional entities continue to make efforts to enhance the protection of, and support the search for solutions for, forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

78. At its thirty-sixth ordinary session, held in Addis Ababa on 18 and 19 February 2023, the African Union adopted the statute of the African Humanitarian Agency, thereby facilitating the eventual operationalization of the Agency. At the subregional level, ECOWAS adopted a multi-annual action plan as an essential step in the regional efforts to fulfil the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees.

79. In Central Africa, efforts are ongoing to finalize a joint multi-year plan to implement the solutions-focused partnership between UNHCR and ECCAS, including support for the Central African Republic situation support platform and the strengthening of the legal and policy framework for protection in the region.

80. UNHCR engaged with the East African Community to support the finalization of its regional refugee management policy, activities under the IGAD Support Platform on Forced Displacement, its Nairobi Process and an action plan for member States to implement the commitments set out in the Kampala Declaration on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The East African Community and IGAD, with the support of ILO, IOM, UNHCR and other partners, organized a ministerial conference on durable solutions for refugees in East Africa

and the Horn of Africa, held in Kampala from 13 to 16 June 2023. In the declaration adopted at that conference, Ministers focused on addressing the root causes and drivers of forced displacement, as well as durable solutions.

81. UNHCR, the East African Community and IGAD undertook country assessment missions to Burundi, Ethiopia and Kenya as part of the African Development Bank regional programme on climate investment for the economic empowerment of refugee and returnee women and women in host communities. FAO and IGAD convened a conference on food crises in East Africa, which resulted in an appeal for investment in cross-border initiatives, trade for sustainable solutions and resilience building for refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. IGAD member State delegates also committed to strengthening and accelerating national and regional efforts to address food crises in East Africa.

82. As part of the coastal response to the Sahel situation, UNICEF, WFP and UNHCR established a regional information-sharing system to support the inter-agency response strategy and implementation in northern Togo for refugees and internally displaced persons. This system strengthened joint resource mobilization to meet the growing needs of displaced populations. As part of its Resilience Hub for Africa, an innovative platform that provided the essential sectors needed to build resilience at the local, regional and national levels, UNDP collaborated with the African Union, regional economic communities and other regional entities to strengthen the resilience of forcibly displaced and displacement-affected communities in Africa. Through the Hub, UNDP also provided risk analysis and prediction advances for developing early warning systems and predictive analytics.

VIII. Durable solutions and the sustainability of solutions

A. Voluntary repatriation and return

83. In 2022, UNHCR facilitated the repatriation of over 25,500 refugees, of whom nearly 21,000 were Burundians and smaller numbers were refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

84. UNHCR facilitated the return of over 5,000 Ivorian refugees between July and December 2022. Over 95 per cent of Ivorian refugees have repatriated, allowing for the closure of Ivorian refugee settlements in Guinea and Togo. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire provided passports to Ivorian refugees who had chosen to remain in Togo. A similar process is currently under way for Ivorians in Ghana, Liberia and Mali. The successful implementation of the comprehensive solutions strategy for Ivorian refugees facilitated the cessation of refugee status for this group on 30 June 2022, thus ending one of the region's protracted refugee situations. Furthermore, 1,300 Nigerian refugees living in northern Cameroon voluntarily repatriated in January 2023.

85. UNHCR and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania also continued to implement the recommendations issued at a high-level meeting on protection and solutions for protracted refugee populations in 2022, implementing intention surveys and site visits.

B. Resettlement and complementary pathways

86. In Southern Africa, UNHCR identified 60,000 refugees in need of resettlement, whereas only 6,500 places were available. In 2022, UNHCR resettled nearly 6,900 individuals, achieving 106 per cent of its goal and more than doubling the number

resettled in 2021. UNHCR also explored complementary pathways, including education, labour mobility and family reunification. At the end of 2022, 27 refugee students from the region received the first postgraduate scholarships in Italy through the University Corridors for Refugees programme, complementing the established World University Service of Canada and the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative programmes.

87. In the West and Central African region, 2,056 refugees were resettled in 2022, while 42 were admitted through complementary pathways to third countries. Furthermore, the cases of 3,912 individuals from the region were submitted for resettlement, surpassing the regional quota of 3,597. In 2023, the region expanded resettlement processing capacities and strengthened fraud prevention and response.

88. In East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, UNHCR submitted the resettlement cases of over 30,000 individuals, while 28,000 spaces were available in 13 countries.

C. Inclusion, resilience, reintegration and post-conflict recovery

89. UNHCR and partners worked to address the needs of refugees and promote sustainability through inclusion and resilience interventions, while supporting post-conflict recovery activities.

90. In Cameroon, ILO completed a study of social protection programmes and benefits in the country with the help of the Korean International Cooperation Agency. In Zambia and Mozambique, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and local financial institutions helped forcibly displaced persons to access banking services. In Uganda, through the partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, ILO initiated a partnership with four financial service providers to extend financial services to refugee and host communities, which has benefited over 300 refugees with improved financial products in the reporting year.

91. Through the SKILL-UP programme, ILO successfully facilitated the mutual recognition of training certificates and harmonized curricula in stonemasonry, plumbing and poultry husbandry in Ghana, Nigeria and Togo. The project enables refugees to make a living and participate in local economies. In several countries in Africa, ILO advocated universal health coverage for refugees and displaced persons.

92. Through the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub, UNHCR and WFP continued to target the most vulnerable populations while promoting the self-reliance of refugees in Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. Self-reliance activities, such as gardening, livestock production and the establishment of other productive assets, were implemented in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, with plans to introduce them in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Through the findings from monitoring carried out in Kenya, it was shown that participants who engaged in self-reliance activities had better access to food and income and recorded a 3.5 per cent higher dietary diversity score than those who did not benefit from the programme. FAO and partners improved food security, nutrition and livelihoods in conflict-affected regions of Ethiopia. Furthermore, in Kenya and Uganda, FAO integrated refugee livelihoods into market-driven value chains and equipped refugees and host communities with skills. In Malawi and Zimbabwe, the World Bank is financing insect farming initiatives, targeting 86 refugee and host community members, with an assessment of impact expected in 2024. Zimbabwe has also allocated 100 hectares of land for farming, and a farmers' support programme in Zambia benefited 430 people, including refugees and host communities. In 2022, 3.1 million people benefited from a WFP-integrated resilience programme in over 2,800 villages across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger.

93. In Nigeria, UNDP reconstructed the Ngarannam village in Borno State, which had been devastated by insurgency in 2014 and 2015. UNDP and UNHCR also launched a stabilization initiative in the country, enabling the return of 27,000 displaced persons and improving access to over 388,000 internally displaced persons. In the Central African Republic, WFP is progressively implementing resilience and livelihood initiatives targeting returnees, refugees and internally displaced persons to support their self-reliance.

94. In Burkina Faso and the Niger, WFP contributed to strengthening social cohesion between displaced populations and host communities. UNMISS developed initiatives to address the root causes of displacement and helped government bodies to improve security for the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons. In Mozambique and South Sudan, IOM and other entities of the United Nations implemented programmes to strengthen community resilience and address the root causes of displacement.

95. In South Sudan, UNAIDS successfully advocated the inclusion of HIV and tuberculosis services in the health response for returning refugees from the Sudan.

IX. Conclusion and recommendations

96. For the past decade, conflicts, violence, climate change and natural disasters in Africa have caused a significant increase in forced displacement, overwhelming host Governments and communities.

97. With this in mind:

(a) I am deeply concerned by the worsening and enduring displacement crisis in Africa, which has grown by nearly 70 per cent in the past five years, primarily owing to a twofold increase in internal displacement, from 14.2 million at the start of 2018 to 28 million at the end of 2022. Unfortunately, the ongoing conflict in the Sudan is only expected to exacerbate this dire situation even more. It is against this background that I commend the African Union Commission for developing a 10-year plan of action to implement the Malabo Declaration adopted in May 2022, especially given its emphasis on tackling the root causes of displacement and the humanitarian crisis in Africa. I appeal for its early implementation. I also applaud the African Union for adopting the statute of the African Humanitarian Agency and urge humanitarian and development actors to support its prompt operationalization;

(b) I welcome the engagement of the African Union and the efforts of regional economic communities and other regional mechanisms to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, as well as to focus on disaster risk reduction and address the impact of climate change. I appeal for sustained international support for these endeavours;

(c) Concerned by the climate emergency, in particular when compounded by or resulting in conflict, I reiterate my call to countries to meet their commitments made at the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the Paris Agreement. I further call upon African States to consider adopting the Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change to create a unified approach to environmental mobility across the continent;

(d) I call upon all parties to conflicts to respect international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, including by protecting civilians during armed conflict and preventing serious human rights violations.

I reiterate the need for State and non-State actors to ensure that humanitarian actors are safe and have access to populations affected by conflicts and disasters;

(e) I deplore the continually increasing numbers of internally displaced persons and urge all actors to contribute to the efforts of my Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, in line with my Action Agenda on Internal Displacement;

(f) I acknowledge the indispensable contribution of women and girls to early action, inclusion and solutions. However, I am deeply concerned about the escalating levels of violence against women and girls, in particular the distressing instances of sexual violence. I commend States that have adopted and implemented policies to empower women and girls to reduce the ever-widening gender inequalities and their continued prevalence in the context of displacement. I also commend the initiatives taken to tackle violence against women and girls, including ongoing efforts to ensure that those responsible for such heinous acts are duly held accountable. I encourage States and humanitarian and development actors to sustain multisectoral responses to gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls, older persons and marginalized groups to ensure their inclusion across the cycle of displacement;

(g) I recognize the positive steps taken in some countries to carry out pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. I urge Governments to include displaced and stateless persons in national systems, as this enables them to attain self-reliance and contribute to their host societies. I call upon States to use the upcoming Global Refugee Forum in 2023 to share best practices and identify new areas in need of support;

(h) I am disturbed by the rising gap between humanitarian needs arising from new displacement and complex emergencies and the available funding, and I am concerned that durable solutions to forced displacement are increasingly elusive. I appeal to the international community to scale up its support to materialize the humanitarian-development-peace nexus;

(i) I encourage efforts by States and other partners to strengthen existing child protection systems, provide access to basic health services and adequate training to social and community workers, promote family unity and develop community-based approaches that foster well-being and resilience. I urge States and humanitarian and development partners to redouble their efforts aimed at ensuring that education systems do not discriminate against refugee, returnee and displaced children and to provide them with inclusive and high-quality learning opportunities;

(j) Countries that have substantial numbers of forcibly displaced persons, which are also affected by conflicts, are enduring worsening food insecurity in Africa. I urge all States, donors and partners to continue supporting the emergency response of the United Nations and its partners, including food assistance programmes targeting vulnerable populations and host communities in need.