



**UNHCR Contribution to the
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Working Session 11: “Humanitarian Issues and Other Commitments”
Warsaw, 18 September 2017**

Distinguished Chairperson,
Dear Participants,

The world has continued to witness a number of fleeing people not seen since World War II. More than 10 million people were newly displaced in 2016 alone, an average of 20 people being displaced per minute and 28,300 per day. Globally, **65.6 million people** are forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and human rights violations. This marks an increase of 300,000 people over the previous year as the world’s forcibly displaced population reaches a new, worrying record high¹. Out of the 65.6 million displaced persons, 2.8 million are asylum-seekers, 22.5 million refugees, and 40.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Measured against Earth’s 7.4 billion population, these numbers mean that 1 in every 113 people globally is now either an asylum-seeker, internally displaced or a refugee.

Recent developments in the **OSCE area** mirror these challenges. By the end of 2016, there were more than 11.3 million persons of concern to UNHCR within the OSCE area – demonstrating an increase of 13% to last year’s figures (10 million). These include 5.5 million refugees, 3 million IDPs, 1.9 million asylum-seekers and more than 690,000 stateless persons. Within the OSCE area, two main regions continue to be the most alarming humanitarian hotspots: the IDP situation in Ukraine and the situation of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach safer shores in Europe.

The ongoing conflict in and around **Ukraine** primarily impacts on civilians, as shown by the reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). Internal displacement has become a major issue that is most likely to transform the local political, economic, social and environmental context in the long term². As of August 2017, there were nearly 1.6 million IDPs in Ukraine³ registered with government authorities. UNHCR has responded by providing emergency shelter materials, construction tools and core relief items.

The plight of refugees is epitomized by the dramatic situation in the **Mediterranean and Aegean Sea**. As of 13 July September, 129,002 people arrived to Europe by sea this year, the majority of them stemming from Nigeria, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire and Bangladesh⁴. More than 83,000 persons arrived in Italy by crossing the Mediterranean via the Central European Route⁵. This route from Libya will remain of high importance as it is currently the most frequented one to Europe – and also the deadliest. During the first half of 2017, there have

¹ See UNHCR Global Trends 2016, page 2: <http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34>

² See the latest ZOIIS survey conducted in the Donbas: <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/zois-report/the-donbas-two-parts-or-still-one/>

³ See UNHCR Ukraine Situation: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/8418>

⁴ See UNHCR Mediterranean Situation: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

⁵ See UNHCR Desperate Journeys - January to June 2017: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58838>

been 2,306 persons reported dead or missing at sea⁶. The refugees and migrants try to escape life-threatening insecurity, instability, difficult economic conditions plus widespread exploitation and abuse. Against this backdrop, UNHCR welcomes OSCE Decision No. 3/16 on OSCE's role in the governance of large movements of migrants and refugees, which was adopted at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg in December 2016. This Decision encourages participating States *"to continue addressing migration-related issues (...) and improve dialogue on migration-related matters with regard to developing possible effective measures and common approaches to address them"*.⁷ UNHCR stands ready to actively assist OSCE and its institutions in implementing this decision in order to address large refugee and migration flows.

Furthermore, **statelessness** remains a pressing issue at the global level as well as within the OSCE area. At the end of 2016, there were more than 690,000 stateless persons in the OSCE area, most of them to be found in Europe and Central Asia. They often lack enjoyment of basic human rights that most of us take for granted: they are denied a legal identity, access to education, health care, official marriage and job opportunities and even the dignity of an official burial and a death certificate. Many pass on the curse of statelessness to their children. In this light, statelessness was, is and will remain a human rights issue of concern in the OSCE area. UNHCR has undertaken several efforts, also in cooperation with the OSCE to tackle this problem and end statelessness by 2024. The most recent example is the *OSCE-UNHCR Handbook on Statelessness in the OSCE Area: International Standards and Good Practices*⁸, which was launched by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier and UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Volker Türk in Vienna in March 2017. Both organizations joined forces to establish international standards and to promote good practices in addressing statelessness issues across the participating States. Thanks to the practical guidance it provides, this new Handbook will be key in helping to prevent and reduce statelessness in the OSCE area, with a positive impact on the lives of thousands of people. UNHCR is fully committed to join up forces with OSCE and States in the region to put an end to this predicament.

Apart from the urgent problem of statelessness, **trafficking in human beings** remains of particular concern to UNHCR. States have a responsibility to ensure that refugees, IDPs, stateless persons and other persons of concern do not become victims of human trafficking, and must ensure that individuals who have been trafficked are afforded protection. Cooperation between OSCE Institutions, such as ODIHR, the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and UNHCR on this topic has been fostered over the last years, notably through the OSCE Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons and its Expert Coordination Team (AECT). UNHCR also contributes to the OSCE project *"Combating Human Trafficking Along Migration Routes"*⁹ through provision of expertise and active participation in all three live simulation exercises.

The **Regional Housing Programme (RHP)** implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia proved to be a fruitful cooperation between UNHCR, OSCE, the European Commission, the Council of Europe Development Bank and OSCE participating States. The RHP contributes to resolving the issue of forced displacement (especially internal displacement) following the 1991-1995 conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia, by providing durable and sustainable housing solutions. As of June 2017, 27 projects have been approved with the aim to provide 9,423 housing solutions for around 37,500 persons.

⁶ See UNHCR Dead and Missing at sea: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>

⁷ See decision on *OSCE's Role in the Governance of Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees*: <http://www.osce.org/cio/289491?download=true>

⁸ See RefWorld: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58b81c404.html>

⁹ See project website: <http://www.osce.org/projects/cthlivex>

All the issues mentioned – refugee flows, internal displacement, statelessness and trafficking in human beings – constitute **shared interests for UNHCR and the OSCE**. As the largest regional security organization, the OSCE is a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation of 57 participating States and 11 Partners for Cooperation, which can add considerable value to this commitment. However, these issues do not only require cooperation between states, but also between international organizations as well as with civil society, NGOs, and the private sector.

Whereas the numbers of people forcibly displaced across the world continue to rise, the funds available for humanitarian aid are not keeping up with the rapidly expanding needs. For 2017 as a whole, UNHCR and partners appealed for USD 6.4 billion to address the most basic needs¹⁰ and USD 690.9 million were requested for the European region alone¹¹. By mid-2017, the annual budget was increased to USD 7.9 billion; however, as of August 2017, only USD 2.78 billion were available.¹² This adds to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and highlights the need for more transnational cooperation on humanitarian issues.

Against this backdrop, we strongly hope that all participating States that have signed the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants¹³ last September will **honour their commitments** such as the protection of human rights of all refugees and migrants, the strong condemnation of racism and xenophobia, support to those countries rescuing, receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants, as well as the guarantee of access to education for refugee and migrant children.

At the **global level**, the topic of **displacement and refugee protection** will remain one of the most urgent issues for the international community. Despite the increasing awareness of the complex challenges related to displacement situations across the OSCE area, UNHCR's proposed long-term durable solutions still lack support. In particular, the number of resettlement places remain highly insufficient in face of the rapidly increasing need – so far in the first half of 2017, only 32,000 people were able to be resettled globally, mainly to Australia and Canada¹⁴. In the past few months, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi issued several statements and appeals to the international and European community to step up its efforts, to efficiently relocate migrants and refugees, and to tackle the current asymmetric burden-sharing in refugee care. It is in the collective interest of the international community as a whole to ensure that the international refugee protection system operates effectively in all regions of the world.

We express gratitude for the fruitful collaboration with the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in 2017 on matters related to refugees, IDPs, and stateless persons, and look forward to working closely together with the incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanship on these issues.

Thank you!

*UNHCR Liaison Office to the OSCE
and Vienna-based UN Agencies
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¹⁰ See Needs and Funding Requirements: <http://www.unhcr.org/564da0e20.html>

¹¹ See Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/17167>

¹² See UNHCR Financials: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/financial>

¹³ See UN New York Declaration: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1

¹⁴ See UNHCR data resettlement portal: <http://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html>