

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME
STANDING COMMITTEE
80th MEETING
23-25 MARCH 2021

NGO Statement on Africa

Dear Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a variety of NGOs.

First, we wish to commend the progressive policies of countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia, aiming to integrate refugees and host communities in livelihood projects and national plans, allow free movement, access to work, and out-of-camps approaches. Those should be replicated to minimize refugee aid dependence and supported through increased humanitarian and development aid.

We also urge to:

- build on progress in adopting regional declarations to redouble efforts in eradicating statelessness in Africa, including by amending discriminatory nationality laws.
- improve refugee protection and extend those efforts to IDPs, including through adopting or domesticating the Kampala Convention.
- ensure laws and policies prevent the double marginalization and exclusion of girls, and prohibit violence and exploitation.

The **pandemic** has further increased operation costs, particularly for the health and WASH sectors. Serious negative impacts on displaced populations include increased SGBV, a range of exploitations, and reduced access to essential services, including psycho-social support.

NGOs are concerned about the quantity of vaccines expected to reach various communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. We, therefore, recommend that:

- UNHCR and African States engage with donors to ensure availability of vaccines to their citizens. Vaccination rollouts should include displaced people, prioritizing those with special needs such as the elderly.
- Regional blocks, under the AU auspices, should lead in negotiating affordable vaccines and ensure timely supplies to States.
- COVAX deployment plans should be transparent and scrutinized.

Turning to specific situations, in **East and Horn of Africa:**

Displacement within, to and from **Somalia** shows no signs of abating. With conflicts, natural disasters, and the pandemic, no progress is expected in addressing poverty and civil unrest. Displacement combined with gender discrimination in nationality law increases statelessness risks for children born to Somali women.

NGOs, therefore, call upon:

- the UN, AU, IGAD, and States to jointly seek an end to the war. Somalia needs stability and the Djibouti Protocol should be implemented.
- the donor community should continue supporting the Somali government not only through humanitarian aid but also with development projects.

For its part, the **South Sudan** refugee crisis remains a major protracted situation, experiencing intercommunal violence, and floods, while also hosting refugees. We, therefore, call on UNHCR and States to:

- increase funding support to the country and refugee-hosting neighbors.
- work with South Sudan's Government to address the conflict's root causes and implement the peace agreement. Humanitarian assistance should reach all parts of the country, without impediments, threats or attacks on aid workers.
- UNHCR should continue working towards durable solutions, through resettlement, supporting resilience, and improving reintegration conditions.

In **Ethiopia**, the ongoing conflict in Tigray led to a steadily deteriorating humanitarian context, with widespread displacement, food insecurity, protection concerns, and severe limitations on humanitarian access. The fate of 20,000 refugees unaccounted for after their camps were destroyed is a concern. We call on UNHCR and States to:

- engage the Ethiopian government to allow unrestricted and unconditional humanitarian access to all Tigray regions, blanket approvals for aid supplies and personnel, and independent needs assessments and monitoring.
- call for accountability for the destruction of refugee camps and the fate of their inhabitants.

In West and Central Africa:

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in the **Sahel region** is marked by spiraling violence, human rights violations, significant restrictions of access to basic services, and massive displacements. As protection needs dramatically increased, UNHCR should continue supporting emergency, specialized and holistic care to survivors of violence and increase community-based protection and prevention strategies. Actors should continue monitoring protection incidents and advocate for respect IHL and Human Rights.

NGOs call for political support in advocating for the respect of the humanitarian principle of "last resort" in the use of armed escorts, in line with neutrality and independence. The use of military escorts and infrastructure must be limited by very strict guidelines.

In Northeast **Nigeria**, deadly attacks on civilians are scarring a region relapsing into a humanitarian crisis. We witness emergency levels of hunger, worsened access to livelihood, and continued displacements. The protection of civilians should therefore be re-prioritized, realigning returns with key protection safeguards. The government should also strive to ensure safety at schools.

Similarly, in the **Lake Chad Basin** region, insecurity limits or prevents humanitarian access to vulnerable communities, while displacement is increasing. Abductions and attacks on schools amount to deliberate and grave violations against children.

NGOs call on UNHCR and States to:

- increase prevention measures to halt attacks against school children and guarantee the right to education for all.
- ensure the implementation, resourcing and promotion of gender-responsive education policies, guaranteeing access to safe, quality and inclusive education.

In the Central African Republic, tensions surrounding recent elections led to a surge in violence, new displacements and a humanitarian emergency. Humanitarian requirements continue to grow as fighting goes on, flows of goods get interrupted and the movement of humanitarian staff and essential supplies is limited.

NGOs, therefore, call on UNHCR and States to:

- scale up the response through additional resources to address mounting protection needs and develop a national strategy to prevent six grave violations against children.
- immediately mobilize funding for the 2021 HRP.
- advocate for the safety and free movement of humanitarian staff.

In Southern Africa, the **Democratic Republic of Congo** remains a complex humanitarian crisis, with thousands of Congolese refugees hosted in the sub-regions. Armed conflicts and inter-communal violence continue to cause forced displacement and tragic loss of lives. NGOs are concerned with the deteriorating situation in eastern DRC, which generates SGBV and high-security risks in neighboring countries. We, therefore, recommend that:

- States continue monitoring the situation, provide humanitarian aid and support addressing the conflicts' root causes.
- UNHCR must continue to prioritize protection in the country, which must translate into enhanced funding and capacity on the ground.
- UNHCR should seize recent opportunities to lift resettlement options for Refugees.

A detailed version of this statement is available at icvanetwork.org

Thank you.