



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Who wants to be the next UN High Commissioner for Refugees?

Questions and Answers with UN High Commissioner Candidates

October 2015

INTRODUCTION

Monday, 14 September 2015 was the deadline for those interested in serving as the next UN High Commissioner for Refugees to submit their applications to the UN Secretariat.

As we did 15 and 10 years ago, ICVA issued a public call encouraging applicants to answer five key questions. ICVA's goal in this initiative is to promote transparency in the selection process - not endorse any particular candidate.

ICVA is a global network of NGOs dedicated to principled and effective humanitarian action. It has a long history in forced displacement issues, and won the Nansen Refugee Award in 1963. ICVA facilitates NGO statements delivered at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) governing board meetings and co-organizes UNHCR's annual consultations with NGOs. We believe the High Commissioner plays a crucial role in advancing protection, assistance and durable solutions for displaced persons worldwide.

Listed below are the individuals who applied for the High Commissioner position and agreed to answer ICVA's five questions:

Filippo Grandi (Italian)

Sania Nishtar (Pakistani)

Helle Thorning-Schmidt (Danish)

Jasmine Whitbread (British and Swiss)

Please note the following:

- The applicants are listed in alphabetical order.
- Their submissions were not edited by ICVA. They are presented exactly as submitted.
- Information on their professional backgrounds can be found on publicly available resources.

We are grateful to these four individuals for taking the time to answer some tough questions. We appreciate their thoughtfulness and willingness to participate in this process.

Filippo Grandi (Italy)

1. UNHCR was established in 1950, initially to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. UNHCR also has a clear mandate for stateless persons and has over time become more engaged with internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations. *How do you see the role of the High Commissioner and UNHCR today?*



Photo: UNRWA

The chief role of the High Commissioner today is more necessary than ever: to be the global advocate on behalf of refugees and to give them a voice grounded in international law. The High Commissioner is the custodian of the 1951 Refugee Convention and related treaties, and the expert authority on legal and operational issues concerning refugees, returnees and stateless people. This role needs to be upheld especially at a time in which humanitarian and asylum principles are weakened, and the sense of collective solidarity - still strong - is under attack by xenophobic attitudes, especially in western countries: the new High Commissioner will lead UNHCR in a frequently hostile environment.

Forced displacement will worsen. Therefore UNHCR will have to remain a smart, agile and efficient resource available to the international community for planning, coordinating and acting to address refugee situations, and for helping states find solutions to the plight of those displaced and stateless. Experience, courage and wisdom will be required in calling for the respect of rights and at the same time proposing concrete solutions for displacement crises which take into account political realities. **The High Commissioner will be an able negotiator of such solutions, encouraging states to cooperate in putting an end to problems that force people to flee.**

The High Commissioner will have to exercise clear leadership, with the support of his/her senior team, whose effectiveness will also depend on the High Commissioner's ability to include, delegate and motivate. In doing so, he/she will have to rely on the organization's key resource - its nearly 10,000 staff. It will be important to build on the successful initiatives conducted in the past years to achieve greater efficiency - especially in emergency situations - and improve conditions of service. **The High Commissioner will thus have to be a strong, experienced, gender-sensitive manager of human and material resources, and an inspiring leader of thousands of diverse people working under difficult circumstances.**

Huge human, material and financial resources - not to mention strong political support - are required for those forcibly displaced to live in safety and dignity, and to find solutions to their plight. **The High Commissioner will have to be a determined, skilled and creative fundraiser, able to place and maintain issues of forced displacement on political agendas.**

Complex crises have made coordination more complex. **The High Commissioner, as one of the UN humanitarian leaders, will be a facilitator of cooperation, working in close alliance with OCHA and other UN and international organizations, especially in providing protection and assistance to IDPs and in situations of mixed population movements.**

UNHCR has a long history of working with partners - especially national and international NGOs. In the current context these links will be more indispensable than ever. Partnerships will also help UNHCR remain innovative, accountable and open to change. **The High Commissioner must truly, concretely value partnerships, and work towards substantially strengthening and renewing UNHCR's partnership culture and practices in a spirit of real complementarity.**

The arrival in Europe of hundreds of thousands of refugees and other migrants, whilst grave and unprecedented, is one of many crises of human displacement happening simultaneously across the world: **the High Commissioner will have to constantly remind public opinion that the bulk of refugee and IDP movements are occurring in the Middle East, Africa, and even regions of relative stability such as East Asia and Latin America.**

A consequence of the influx into the heart of Europe, however, has been that the world is now paying serious attention to refugees. The situation is critical, but there are opportunities. **Addressing the root causes of displacement will remain crucial and the High Commissioner will play a key role in highlighting this issue.** Refugees are at the centre of intersecting debates: on improving the management of economic migration, whose routes and means are often those also used by refugees; on reducing poverty and inequality; on updating time-worn mechanisms to prevent and stop wars and human rights violations. UNHCR is not a political or development actor but must step up its advocacy with those who are - world leaders, other organizations and civil society - and call for urgent action. In doing so it must become more sharp and convincing by joining with its partners in cohesive and powerful alliances.

Therefore the High Commissioner, also as a senior adviser of the UN Secretary-General, is today an important participant in the global discussions on conflict prevention and resolution, sustainable development, human rights and climate change, in a conceptual context framed by the Sustainable Development Goals. In these discussions the High Commissioner must represent all refugees. He/she will speak with them; hear their views; be familiar with their concrete needs and circumstances. It will be the High Commissioner's responsibility to ultimately voice their concerns, aspirations, and rights; and to help seize amidst the overlapping and interlinked crises the opportunities to solve their plight.

2. The number of displaced persons has surpassed that witnessed in World War II. UNHCR's current budget is only 37% funded. The High Commissioner has said the system is not broken, but it is broke. *What would be your priorities in the face of many competing demands and limited resources?*

The new High Commissioner must reverse the growing gap between UNHCR's budget and contributions, which has gone from 36% to 45% in the past four years. He/she will have to be UNHCR's chief fundraiser, no matter how difficult. He/she must also participate in the debate on ensuring the effectiveness of a humanitarian system taxed by multiple crises. The High Commissioner must be a champion of collective action by concerned organizations to avoid humanitarian bankruptcy.

UNHCR must further strengthen its accountability to stakeholders. This has technical aspects: improving reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and building on the current impressive set of internal reforms. But it is also about communicating more strategically the impact of its work, or lack thereof if resources are insufficient. The extreme visibility of the current refugee crisis in Europe, tragic as it is, will help convey this message: many refugees arriving in Europe have left asylum countries where assistance is not adequately resourced, in search of dignity and security. UNHCR's partners and especially NGOs will be crucial in providing data and stories regarding their living conditions. This will add credibility to fundraising efforts.

Unless donorship broadens soon and substantively, the funding crisis will worsen beyond remedy: 82% of UNHCR's funding in 2014 came from only 12 governments. It is unlikely that the regime of voluntary funding will be transformed into a predictable one of assessed contributions. Humanitarian leaders, including the High Commissioner, must ensure that contributions from non-traditional donors become systematic and predictable. This is very urgent. The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit is an opportunity to promote substantial commitments from those states that are not regular humanitarian donors, but whose economies have grown and whose strategic interests have become more global than twenty years ago.

Contributions to UNHCR from private donors have increased in recent years but they remain a priority for the new High Commissioner. There is much scope for further growth and the potential to increase interest in refugees and displaced people among a wider section of the public. But UNHCR must be aware of the need not to occupy an unduly large share of a market which remains vital to many partners and especially NGOs.

It is very likely, however, that funds will remain scarce, and it will therefore be necessary to prioritise. **UNHCR's focus must be on supporting those in need of protection and immediate assistance, while maintaining a catalytic role in ensuring that broader needs are covered by other actors.** This means ensuring that resources are spent as much as possible where it matters most - on the needs of refugees and displaced people - and support costs are kept to a minimum.

3. UNHCR seeks to maintain humanitarian values and protection space in the fulfillment of its mandate. *How do you see UNHCR continuing this work in the future?*

UNHCR's essential role is to uphold the right of refugees to seek asylum. That is its primary humanitarian space. The High Commissioner must lead this effort, through negotiations with governments and public advocacy, irrespective of political pressures. **And these will also be the tools to achieve another important task of UNHCR and defining its protection space, that of reducing statelessness.**

UNHCR's humanitarian space is preserved by strengthening operational, legal and policy frameworks for refugees in host countries. **This is also true for IDPs in their own countries.** Improving cooperation with other organizations will be especially important in strengthening IDP support. The High Commissioner will have to ensure - through inter-agency arrangements coordinated by OCHA - that IDPs have access to protection and assistance, particularly in situations in which internal displacement has the same causes as refugee flows; and where therefore available synergies must be used to pursue solutions for all.

A crucial way to defend humanitarian space and values is by being physically close to those displaced. Presence is in itself a tool of protection, and gives credibility to protection pursued at other levels. It serves to act effectively, give witness in a credible manner, and

provide support, encouragement and hope to those in need and particularly to groups in need of special attention such as women and children, unaccompanied minors, the disabled, and other vulnerable people. **The High Commissioner will have to ensure that UNHCR and its partners, especially NGOs, are able to operate safely next to refugees, IDPs and returnees.**

This will continue to be achieved, of course, through the field staff of UNHCR and other organizations. In many contexts it will remain dangerous, though of course those will be the situations in which field presence is most important. **The High Commissioner will have to participate in the efforts by the humanitarian community, including NGOs and ICRC, in advocating and negotiating for the neutrality of humanitarian operations to be respected, especially in war zones, and for the physical safety of staff to be ensured, including through adequately funded security measures.**

4. The agency has at times been confronted with ambiguity in the humanitarian system regarding coordination, protection, assistance, and durable solutions – particularly in areas with mixed populations. *How do you see UNHCR fitting into the broader humanitarian and development context?*

The transnational nature of refugee crises means that for UNHCR to fit into country-based, inter-agency arrangements (integrated missions, “Delivering as One”, the transformative agenda) will continue to require special attention. But to be part of those arrangements will become even more necessary. **The High Commissioner must systematically foster a culture of greater cooperation both within UNHCR and with other organizations; and vice-versa, ensure that the broader humanitarian system benefits from UNHCR’s regional scope and operational approach.**

A lot has been achieved through the transformative agenda. The Refugee Coordination Model and the joint letter issued by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the High Commissioner last year are clear on the division of labour, especially between OCHA and UNHCR. Making organizations work together in volatile environments will however continue to present difficulties as partnerships are tested over operational, financial, and administrative issues. **The High Commissioner will help clarify UNHCR’s role in different situations, and ensure that it is fulfilled:** in refugee situations, by exercising leadership and providing support to key partners such as WFP, other UN agencies and NGOs; in situation of internal displacement, by cooperating with the Humanitarian Coordinator, particularly in clusters in which it plays a specific role; in both, by maintaining close dialogue with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The responsibility of the High Commissioner, as of other leaders in this field, will be uphold the cooperative spirit of agreements in a pragmatic manner. **The purpose must be to ensure that the common purpose of providing support and protection to those displaced remains everybody’s goal, at all levels.**

The debate on linkages between humanitarian and development aid in the past focused on repatriation. In the current context, unfortunately, the emphasis has shifted to prolonged refugee situations. Furthermore, host communities - often poor themselves - bear the greatest cost in terms of receiving refugees. It is true that refugees make positive contributions to societies hosting them. But large influxes stretch their resources, infrastructure and social fabric. This can have negative impact on asylum and other refugee rights, and also on national and regional security and stability.

Refugees in situations of protracted exile must have access to education, health, and decent standards of living. The burden placed on host communities and states must be relieved. **The High Commissioner will have to lead efforts in forging long overdue and functioning partnerships with development actors (including UNDP, UNICEF,**

the World Bank and NGOs engaged in development). They possess features which UNHCR does not have: specific technical expertise, sound economic and social analysis, the ability to interact competently with host governments over development, dedicated tools for specific vulnerable groups, and the capacity to mobilize resources outside UNHCR's reach. This will allow UNHCR to free up resources and focus on its core tasks of protection and immediate assistance to refugees.

This effort will require leadership, political negotiations, management efforts and innovative thinking; on UNHCR's side, by getting staff more focused and better trained, and ensuring that programme planning takes into consideration development needs; on the part of development actors, through shifts in culture and sometimes in their mandates and *modus operandi*.

On the other hand, the discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals has provided an opportunity to talk about funding for development and its humanitarian links. **The new High Commissioner will have to be an active participant in the broad SDG debate, speaking of the necessity not to neglect the development needs of refugees and host communities.**

5. Among other important criteria listed in the [vacancy announcement](#), the High Commissioner's successor must have partnership experience. UNHCR has increasingly worked through partners (nearly 1000 NGOs) to reach persons of concern on the ground. *How do you view partnership?*

Partnerships in international aid are very different in theory and practice. Political, financial and operational realities mean that uneven, hierarchical structures are constantly created between partners. This can be partly overcome through conscious efforts, good will and innovative thinking.

Partnerships are effective if partners bring added value to the relationship to achieve common purposes: this must apply more consistently to UNHCR's closest partnership, that with NGOs. They will continue to provide expertise, field presence, ability to advocate for refugee rights, and additional resources. UNHCR will contribute the capacity to lead and coordinate refugee operations, its ability to interact with political and development interlocutors, support in key areas such as funding, logistics and staff security.

Technical aspects are important, too. **The increase in emergency situations requires flexibility in partnership and especially in funding modalities.** Consultative planning and constant exchanges will be required. Accountability systems are more reliable if based on simple processes, limiting bureaucratic requirements so that more resources are available for field work. The partnership devil is in the details, and interface between partners occurs in different areas, including technical and administrative. The High Commissioner will thus have to remain vigilant so that working together is grounded in a spirit of collaboration at all levels.

Meanwhile traditional partnership roles (donors, coordinators, implementors) are being transformed and made more dynamic by new actors from civil society (foundations, academic institutions, businesses, eg), whose presence in the humanitarian sphere is growing, and by new tools, especially social media. **New partners create new dimensions of accountability which organizations like UNHCR must be open to, and address.**

In this evolving context, for UNHCR, the concept of equal, mutually accountable partnerships must become more solidly rooted in culture and practices. **This will require**

personal involvement by its leader. Being a good partner, for UNHCR, will start with the High Commissioner.

Conclusion: my candidacy to the post of UN High Commissioner for Refugees

I am confident that I have the skills and expertise to be the next High Commissioner for refugees. They have been tested through more than thirty years of engagement in refugee work, humanitarian action and international relations.

I have a proven leadership record in situations fraught with political and operational challenges. I led the UN's other refugee organization - and one of its most complex agencies, UNRWA. Supporting Palestinian refugees is a humanitarian and development task with substantial human rights and protection aspects. It requires operating amidst some of the most intractable political issues in the world: during my time at the helm of UNRWA this included tensions in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, armed conflicts in Gaza, the Syria catastrophe, a war and multiple tensions in Lebanon: all in the context of the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict, against the backdrop of the Arab Spring and the global economic downturn.

To navigate the contrasting agendas of UNRWA's stakeholders demanded political and diplomatic skills, the ability to formulate principled policies recognizing the realities of a fluid environment, and a sense of balance between prudence and boldness. This was true also in my previous assignments in Afghanistan, where for over four years I was responsible not only for the return of refugees and IDPs, but also, as deputy SRSG for political affairs, for elections, human rights and disarmament during a crucial period in Afghan history following the Bonn Agreement. All those experiences and skills are highly relevant to the High Commissioner's job.

My leadership qualities and indeed my ability to stay the course under extreme pressure have been tested in situations of violent conflict, humanitarian emergencies and mass population movements with acute protection and security challenges. To name a few: I participated in humanitarian operations in Iraq after the first Gulf War. I led the response to the influx of one million Rwandans in Goma in four days in 1994 and the refugee rescue operation in Congo during the civil war in 1996-7. I coordinated the repatriation of three million Afghans after 2001. I advocated on behalf of millions of Palestinian refugees in Gaza and Syria in recent years. I have learned what needs to be achieved to ensure the protection of refugees, IDPs and returnees, both in the field and by seeking the support of political leaders at the highest level; I addressed sensitive issues of neutrality and interaction with non-state actors; and I acquired organizational skills in large emergency situations.

I have always worked well with partner organizations, at the policy and strategic level and in field operations. My approach - be it in coordinating emergency refugee responses with a very large number of actors involved, or in situations requiring complex planning by political, humanitarian and development actors (eg in Afghanistan) - has consistently been one of transparency, openness and collegiality. I know very well that working together is not a threat to an organization's mandate or turf. It is a strength to be relied on.

I have managed complex operations and wide scale organizational reform. I have held management responsibilities from my days as field officer and then emergency team leader with UNHCR, especially in crisis situations. At UNRWA I managed for many years the largest civilian agency of the UN - 30,000 staff in a most volatile region, providing state-like services to five million refugees in education, health and poverty alleviation

across several countries; dealt with the most forceful staff unions in the UN system; and was the leader of a very innovative reform effort to modernize the organization.

I believe in consultative, collegial and transparent management, which is gender sensitive and values diversity. I always think of delegation as a foundation of good management, and have relied on synergies with my deputies and senior teams. **I have had to make difficult decisions throughout my career, sometimes - literally - of life and death for thousands of people;** in doing this, I have always sought and received support and counsel from partners and colleagues.

I have been a successful fundraiser in voluntarily-funded organizations with substantial budgets, for which no funding was ever guaranteed, and in which fundraising was vital. I was a professional fundraiser for UNHCR, working with EU institutions; at UNAMA I had to raise urgently needed funds to conduct elections in Afghanistan; at UNRWA I led tough efforts to secure up to US\$1.5bn per year, including for emergencies in Gaza, Syria and Lebanon, with a strong focus on public and private funding from Gulf States. The funding environment was politically and economically difficult for UNRWA: negotiations had to be conducted with governments at the highest level. Funding from most traditional donors was increased; and I established lasting relationships with non-traditional donors, particularly in the Gulf, Latin America, East Asia and the private sector: all areas in which (also for UNHCR) there is room to expand humanitarian financing.

I have been committed to the cause of refugees throughout my professional life. I strongly believe that refugees and other displaced people must (and can) be provided with international protection; that statelessness will be reduced; that solutions can be found for those subjected to forced displacement. These beliefs moved me, as a young man, to become a refugee worker at the Thai-Cambodian border. They supported me when I witnessed death and destruction on a large scale and dealt with the intractable dilemmas of working in war zones. They helped me overcome helplessness when millions of Rwandan refugees poured into Eastern Congo in 1994 and thousands died of cholera; or when I paid my last field visit with UNRWA, to the devastated Damascus suburb of Yarmouk, last year. This ideal, tempered and strengthened by the experience of hard political realities, is the strongest motivation for my candidacy.

It would be of benefit to UNHCR, at a time of crisis, to be led by a High Commissioner who has spent most of his career in the field, in direct contact with people forced into exile and their actual problems; but who has also been involved in policy making and political negotiations and who has strived, for more than thirty years, to ensure that political agendas include refugees and displaced people and focus on solving displacement.

I believe in solidarity and compassion as fundamental values in a world torn between globalised trends and inward-looking instincts. I believe that the United Nations - an institution I have served for 27 years - continues to be the organization where these values can find the space and instruments to be translated into concrete measures in support of all people, including the most vulnerable, in the spirit of its Charter.

UNHCR provides this space and is one of these instruments. Leading it is one of today's greatest challenges, but also one of the most extraordinary opportunities to contribute to the world's peace and security by mitigating the pains of exile and statelessness for millions of people, and helping them find a path towards stable, productive and hopeful lives.

Sania Nishtar (Pakistan)

1. UNHCR was established in 1950, initially to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. UNHCR also has a clear mandate for stateless persons and has over time become more engaged with internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations. **How do you see the role of the High Commissioner and UNHCR today?**



Photo: Heartfile

The UNHCR's legal global mission to "protect and support refugees, assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement" has become more relevant than it has ever been as it faces the highest levels of forced displacements in history. Protecting 60 million refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons, worldwide, in contexts of conflict, protracted crises, and persecution across several continents and seas and fielding an average of more than 300 missions a year in the most difficult, often dangerous environments is a formidable challenge. These challenges co-exist with an unfortunate shrinking of the humanitarian space, therefore, compounding the problem. These realities create multiple imperatives for refugee protection, new partnerships, continual programmatic improvement, protection of the humanitarian space, staff safety and security, and underscore the need to address the root causes of displacements and unresolved policy issues.

The role of UNHCR today must also be viewed in the context of major shifts underway in international development, cooperation and humanitarian assistance. The United Nations 2030 framework and the outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development have ushered in a new development paradigm. This paradigm is relevant for UNHCR's scope of work for three reasons. First, as the 2030 Agenda is progressively global and calls for solidarity in action for the long term, it becomes highly relevant for tackling the root causes of displacements. Secondly, its emphasis on strengthening country institutions and systems and policy direction for deeper linkages among development, humanitarian and climate change-related work, matters deeply in relation to developing sustainable solutions during protracted crises. Thirdly, this changing paradigm is the precursor to a new humanitarian landscape, which is envisaged to emerge after the World Humanitarian Summit, early next year. Hopefully, in this new framework, local actors in humanitarian action will emerge more empowered, and national and regional institutions will have a greater role, thereby, allowing international actors to focus on areas where they have a comparative advantage.

In this new paradigm, the mission of the UNHCR will, if anything, become even more integral to finding new solutions to global challenges. The question is not just how the UNHCR can develop and achieve its mission effectively by fitting into the humanitarian system, but rather how UNHCR can drive the necessary changes in the humanitarian system more broadly and emerge as a model institution, a model team player, and an even stronger beacon of hope for those that need urgent help.

2. The number of displaced persons has surpassed that witnessed in World War II. UNHCR's current budget is only 37% funded. The High Commissioner has said the system is not broken,

but it is broke. **What would be your priorities in the face of many competing demands and limited resources?**

Setting priorities isn't always straightforward in an organization such as the UNHCR. The UNHCR must shape priorities both through long-term planning and consideration of non-emergency contexts and by ensuring capacity to address unexpected events and circumstances. It is important to ensure that both the priorities and the criteria on which they are established are consistent with UNHCR's ethics and principles and the values of humanitarian action—humanity, solidarity, independence, neutrality, impartiality, and the protection of refugees.

Establishing priorities also requires forward thinking and a combination of broad consultation to ensure that all relevant information is gathered and stakeholders engaged, but it then requires decisiveness – making clear decisions, communicating them, motivating all to stand behind them, monitoring the effectiveness and mitigating any negative consequences.

I believe in, and have been a campaigner for, evidence-based priorities, and believe that the process of setting priorities and policies is as important as these stipulations themselves. I also know that an inside view of an institution's challenges, current activities, resources, and potential new opportunities is critical to establishing priorities effectively. I therefore, believe that the UNHCR must undertake a process, building further on the reform program that is already well underway to chalk out a vision for the future. These considerations notwithstanding, the glaring financing gap seems an obvious priority. As the financial gap is just too large for conventional sources to bridge, there is a need both to diversify and to apply innovative approaches to financing. UNHCR should also be a learning agency that is open to fresh ideas and approaches. Lessons from international experiences in a variety of fields should be considered and applied where relevant. Solidarity micro levies, global product development partnerships, conditional debt forgiveness instruments, earmarked taxes, social and development impact bonds, risk pooling innovations and Islamic social finance, are examples that have been tested or are being mooted, from which insights can be drawn. Through my experience mobilizing donations in Pakistan, I know that a huge untapped potential exists with regard to mobilization of 'Zakat'—Islam's third pillar—for humanitarian crises, which needs to be actively tapped.

The leader's challenge is not limited just to addressing resource mobilization. Last month at the World Bank Group's Washington offices, during my [opening talk](#) at the Global Pandemic Financing Stakeholders' meeting, I made a case for the need to view financing holistically, along the entire value chain—mobilization, pooling, channeling and allocation, implementation, tracking, monitoring, evaluation and accountability—and not just through the mobilization lens. The same logic appears for humanitarian financing, more broadly.

The organization must also continue to improve its systems. I strongly believe in the value of effective, robust, transparent and accountable institutions and systems of delivery. This is evidenced in the title of my most recent book, [Choked Pipes](#), where pipes were analogous for the delivery system.

3. UNHCR seeks to maintain humanitarian values and protection space in the fulfillment of its mandate. How do you see UNHCR continuing this work in the future?

UNHCR serves as a beacon for tens of millions of refugees in relation to saving lives, alleviating suffering, and restoring human dignity. As mentioned earlier, it has a critical role to play in the foreseeable future with several emergencies and protracted crises at hand. Under António Guterres' leadership, the organization's reputation, fiscal envelope, implementation capacity, and depth of dialogue have all significantly enhanced and a reform plan is fairly far advanced. Any future effort should build on past achievements, draw on learnings and evidence, and also innovate.

Bold leadership is needed in the future to tackle complex problems, attract new support, build new partnerships to maximize the potential of all stakeholders, and enshrine a philosophy of constant improvement to safeguard the lives of those UNHCR serves. The UNHCR must bring understanding of, and experience with both the developed and the developing world and how the interaction between the two must evolve to address the refugee crisis and to strengthen further the office of the UNHCR institutionally, operationally, and reputationally, in the future.

4. The agency has at times been confronted with ambiguity in the humanitarian system regarding coordination, protection, assistance, and durable solutions – particularly in areas with mixed populations. **How do you see UNHCR fitting into the broader humanitarian and development context?**

Within the UN humanitarian system, UNHCR has a defined role. In the case of a refugee situation, agencies work in sectors under UNHCR's leadership but in other humanitarian situations, another UN agency has a lead role with UNHCR assuming specific responsibility for 'protection' under the cluster approach. Several agencies, therefore, have a role in most crises to deliver aid and protection, especially when mixed populations exist in the same geographic area in the setting of complex emergencies and natural disasters. Although norms and institutional mechanisms exist within the UN system to guide joint operations—I have seen firsthand how the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods in Pakistan reinforced interconnectedness on ground—but practical considerations on ground in countries and operational characteristics of the response continue to create new coordination challenges. Coordination is a key priority in such settings as it has a direct impact on the delivery of protection, aid and services. It is also essential for optimizing resources in a fiscally constrained environment.

Better use of data sharing platforms should be a priority in this regard. These can allow UN agencies and other actors involved to retain their independence but at the same time gain from a shared platform, which can give better visibility to all parties, enable real time efficient information exchange, progress tracking, sharing of successes and mapping of existing gaps in action, thus contributing to avoidance of duplication and optimization of constrained resources. Coordination can be implicit in such a framework. It is also critical to embed implementation-relevant process evaluations to guide real time operational decision making in order to ensure that the response is needs-based and that humanitarian action conforms to humanitarian principles.

With regard to UNHCR's fit in the development framework, I would again reiterate the importance of the linkages between humanitarian and development work. Even in the setting of camps, basic necessities such as water, sanitation, health and education services are necessary. Depending on the context, host country's local governments and development actors have relevant capacity in this regard and are invaluable partners. Systems designed for inclusive growth, poverty reduction and social protection as well as development, more broadly are relevant for humanitarian work not only because they can be scaled up during times of disasters but also because they can help develop sustainable solutions during times of protracted crises. For example, if instruments such as mobile money cash transfer capacities, networks to share resources, frameworks to enable service 'purchasing' from the private sector, volunteer and diaspora engagement mechanisms are well established in countries, refugee protection, integration and resettlement can be facilitated. Humanitarian and development action are therefore, deeply interlinked.

5. Among other important criteria listed in the [vacancy announcement](#), the High Commissioner's successor must have partnership experience. UNHCR has increasingly worked through partners (nearly 1000 NGOs) to reach persons of concern on the ground. **How do you view partnership?**

I strongly believe in the value of partnerships. An agency such as UNHCR needs partnerships at various levels for different reasons. Within the UN system, first and foremost, for collaborative

division of labor and to draw on comparative advantage; with a range of donors to mobilize resources and with governments, INGOs, local actors, religious groups and the private sector to maximize implementation effectiveness. The notion of “partnership” must also include individuals (whether prominent philanthropists or individuals on the streets of a country in crisis), the military, academic institutions, and for-profit entrepreneurial efforts and social enterprise. While framing the partnership grid, regional organizations, host countries, affected individuals, and men and women in UNHCR must be factored in as force multipliers.

The private sector needs to be engaged and harnessed even further to assist with humanitarian implementation. Since UNHCR is not strictly a norms and standards setting agency, but is more implementation-oriented, considerations concerning conflict of interest are much easier to manage, but must be scrupulously managed, nevertheless. I work closely with the World Health Organization, where management of conflict of interest is the bedrock of our work. In contrast to policy setting, the private sector can play a crucial role in implementation, which needs to be harnessed more proactively.

There are obvious benefits to building strong multi-stakeholder partnerships to exploit synergy, but this process can also be confronted by challenges. In order to overcome these, it is important that partnerships be guided by principles and norms within the rubric of operational and policy frameworks, explicit process-related guidelines and clarity about power relationships and accountabilities. It is also important that partnerships be regarded as a strategy and tool to achieve an outcome and not an end in themselves.

While fostering partnerships, it is also critical to leverage comparative advantage and build safeguards against the risks of duplication, fragmentation, overlap and competitive behaviors. Investments are therefore, needed in new competencies, which can enable asset allocation mapping and establish incentives for collaborative division of labor and partnership-sensitive performance metrics.

Why am I the best candidate for the job?

I have a broad ranging experience in civil society, government, international development and global health. My experience straddles policy and advocacy, global and local, humanitarian and development, research and implementation, institution building and reform. With great humility, I outline twelve reasons why I would bring unique leadership to the role.

My country of origin: I come from the country that hosts the largest number of refugees. It has been a convention for donors to assume leadership of UNHCR. Passing the leadership to a citizen of a country that has been a long-standing host to the world’s largest displacement for over three decades would send a strong signal of the critical importance of bringing all stakeholders together and empowering those countries most affected to contribute.

My exposure to refugees. I have had a life-long exposure to refugees. My first experience was back in 1979 when my distant relatives arrived in Peshawar from Kabul after a grueling journey in the hidden compartment of a transport trailer. As a family, we hosted devastated families for months thereafter. As a teenager, I saw this suffering first-hand and was immersed in a context where my hometown, Peshawar, and its environs in the north west of Pakistan, morphed dramatically, as it re-shaped to accommodate millions of refugees. Refugees have been a constant feature in my life since then, especially whilst training and working at hospitals, and more recently through the [access to treatment program](#) I have founded, where almost 20 per cent of the patients we assist are from neighboring Afghanistan.

Experience in international development and global health: I have worked in partnership with multilateral agencies, notably WHO, multi-stakeholder conveners such as the World Economic Forum, INGOs, foundations and academic institutions and have served on governing boards of

international agencies. I have deeply engaged with the global scientific community through my work leading and being part of global commissions, most recently, for example, as co-chair of WHO [Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity](#), and as member of the [Planetary Health Commission](#) and [Pain and Palliative Care Commission](#). I have contributed intellectually by writing articles and books. I have evaluation oversight experience, as past Chair of [GAVI's](#) Evaluation Advisory Committee and understand the value of using research and evidence to drive change.

Experience in government: In 2013, I served as Federal Minister in the caretaker Government of Pakistan where I was responsible for four portfolios, Education and Trainings, Science and Technology, Information Technology and Telecom, and Health. My selection as the only woman in a handpicked cabinet of 14 technocrats, to oversee the first democratic transition in a country of 200 million people was truly humbling for me personally. I am particularly proud of my decision to reestablish Pakistan's Ministry of Health and undertake a transparency approach to working with the government, while in office through the publication of a set of [Handover Papers](#). I will bring the same rigorous ethics and moral responsibility to the UNHCR.

Experience in civil society: appointing a UNHCR from a civil society background would give concrete shape to the UN's policy intent of involving non-state actors in the new Global Goals development paradigm, especially in the case of an agency like UNHCR, where 720 out of the stated 900 partnerships are with civil society entities. My work with the NCD Alliance, World Heart Federation, and IUHPE, gave me exposure to the workings of international civil society. I am familiar with in country civil society dynamics, as founder of an [NGO](#).

Public service: Stepping back, in 2000, I left a lucrative career as Pakistan's first woman cardiologist and set course on a journey to improve the lives of the poorest and most marginalized, to challenge the business-as-usual models and develop innovative solutions that are saving people's lives. Among other things, I contributed to government agencies on policy on a pro bono basis, became a voice demanding improved governance, and established an NGO and a humanitarian assistance system. I have contributed time, pro-bono to lead intellectual pursuits, such as the [Pakistan Lancet Series](#) to strengthen the evidence base of reform, and have deeply engaged in discourse on [governance inflection points](#) in my country. I would bring the same compassion and commitment to UNHCR.

Positive role in western-Muslim engagement and peace building: More broadly, I will also be well positioned to foster better western-Muslim relationships, drawing on my earlier experiences, such as for example, engagement with an [Aspen Institute initiative](#) and other [peace building](#) efforts. The traditional donor paradigm is changing and with two-thirds of all refugees coming from Muslim origin, I would be well positioned to lead UNHCR and increase support from new donors.

Medical background: I am a medical doctor with a background in Non-Communicable diseases (NCDs). With my clinical, policy, advocacy and implementation experience, I am well placed to draw on the strengths of stakeholders to provide solutions for the health and wellbeing of both refugees as well as staff, most of who work in hazardous and stressful situations. Networks such as the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Wellbeing and Mental Health, of which I am Vice Chair, is an example of the constituencies, I could access for technical support.

Modern communication: I am also experienced in communication and advocacy and believe that powerful and empowering communication is critical to addressing refugees' needs. I am a regular keynote speaker at international and national events and have embraced old and new media channels to reach out to new audiences about the challenges faced by the poorest communities and have used novel tools such as mobile phones for program building.

Systems and institutional knowledge: Frontline learnings which come from setting up a ministry, an NGO, and a charity would help contribute to the process of organizational reform. I am from

the health systems 'constituency' with a strong commitment to Universal Health Coverage. The same pledge—no one is left behind—applies to refugees. I believe a functioning system can deliver on multiple objectives. For example, in establishing [Heartfile Health Financing](#), I have strived to address both *humanitarian* and *development* objectives, as is demonstrated in a [recent documentary on my work](#).

Partnership building: I have been engaged in partnership building at various levels. In 2003, I led the [National Plan of Action on NCDs](#) by forging a [tripartite partnership](#) between my NGO Heartfile, the Ministry of Health and WHO. I have led several public private partnerships with government agencies, including the [Bureau of Statistics](#) and the Ministry of Health. I mobilized more than [100 stakeholders](#) for mainstreaming the voice of the civil society in the decision making process in the [Pakistan Health Policy Forum](#). As chair of the award winning *World Heart Day* initiative, I learnt to establish partnerships for global advocacy. I learnt to leverage transparency as a tool to mobilize donors in support of, and have established a range of other interface arrangements within Heartfile Financing. These experiences would be relevant for an agency such as UNHCR.

Leading teams: I was once asked in an interview what my greatest strength is, and my honest answer was that I have a deep understanding of what I don't know. I understand traditional leadership roles, but I also understand that one of the biggest demands of leadership is the management of complex situations. The UNHCR has to manage an array of moving targets. I believe my diverse experience and background has prepared me well for developing and leading the teams to do this.

Further information can be accessed at <http://sanianishtar.info>

Helle Thorning-Schmidt (Denmark)

1. UNHCR was established in 1950, initially to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. UNHCR also has a clear mandate for stateless persons and has over time become more engaged with internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations. How do you see the role of the High Commissioner and UNHCR today?



Photo: Global Education First Initiative

I see a world of growing disparities and a growing number of weak and fragile states, or states that show blatant disregard for human rights and IHL. I also see a system of international governance which fails to find the necessary political solutions to some of the fundamental problems of our time. Moreover, I see extremely violent and destructive non-state actors entering into the equation whose only objective seems to be the creation of even more human suffering. People are increasingly becoming not only victims, but targets. For these reasons the role - or actually the roles - of the High Commissioner and of UNHCR are more important than ever. The High Commissioner's Office must perform several functions simultaneously: Guardian of the Convention and the mandate, advocate for people of concern, fundraiser, networker and, not least, political mediator focused on reducing the suffering of the affected populations.

First and foremost the High Commissioner must continue to be a strong voice on the side of the weak and the most vulnerable - both refugees, IDP's and stateless people - in order to ensure their protection and to assist them to cope in material terms, and ultimately also in finding durable solutions. Within the core priority special attention should be the protection of women and children, which are both particularly vulnerable groups.

Today, most attention is focused on refugees and internally displaced persons. However, I am equally committed to continuing the important work that UNHCR carries out in support of stateless people. I think that the issue of statelessness is often overshadowed by other burning issues and that not many are aware of the fact that more than 10 million people have no nationality. This has to change. We need, for instance, to continue pushing for nationality being passed to children from both parents, not just fathers as is still the case in more than 25 countries, including Syria as I understand it.

Crucial to the ability of UNHCR to operate is also the ability of the organization to create strong networks with all partners and stakeholders. For their part donors must provide the necessary financial means to the organisation, and the High Commissioner will have to engage heavily in this. Equally important is good links to countries receiving refugees and providing them with the necessary protection space. As more refugees live outside camps, it is particularly important that the Office creates good relations with local communities that host displaced people, to help them manage the challenges that they are facing in the best possible manner.

Finally, it is vital that the Office is able to continuously adapt to an ever-shifting humanitarian system and global landscape. I know that the UNHCR can do this. It is a strong and respected organization, blessed with highly committed and competent staff - and it is an organization that over the past decades already has demonstrated an ability to

remain vibrant, agile, dynamic and relevant in the face of huge challenges. In the future this ability to change will be further tested.

2. The number of displaced persons has surpassed that witnessed in World War II. UNHCR's current budget is only 37% funded. The High Commissioner has said the system is not broken, but it is broke. *What would be your priorities in the face of many competing demands and limited resources?*

There is no doubt that the humanitarian system is facing a massive shortfall of funding, leaving ever more people underserved. However, I think it is also crucial to recognize what has been achieved already. More funding is made available, more humanitarian assistance is delivered in emergencies, and more lives are saved than ever before. That is impressive and it provides a strong foundation on which to build – at a time when needs clearly continue to grow.

I am concerned to see that conflicts last longer, become more complex as well as more regional and thus also affect middle-income countries that traditionally do not have the same access to international assistance. As a result, more and more people end up in protracted displacement situations with no solution in sight and increasingly with too little humanitarian assistance. This calls for a different response - by assistance actors, by host governments and by the international community in general.

In the absence of political solutions to major humanitarian crises, fund raising is absolutely crucial. I see no alternative to asking existing OECD-donors to contribute even more, at least in the short term – and that would be a clear priority of mine, if my application for this position were to be successful. 2016 is looming large, and the UNHCR and other organizations face a significant shortfall, not least in the context of the protracted crises in Africa. New non-OECD-donors must of course be included as much as possible, and private sector funding pursued vigorously, but that will not bridge the gap in the short term.

I look forward to the findings and recommendations from the High Level Panel on Financing. We need to continue pushing for greater efficiency and embrace innovation, we need to reconsider the way humanitarian aid is organized and we need to look for new types of assistance that are focused on strengthening self-reliance and resilience. In this perspective, the goal is no longer just to increase humanitarian assistance but rather to make sure that resources are used for greater impact.

I am also committed to ensuring that the UNHCR will continue to be the leading international actor in reversing global displacement trends. The way forward should be based on the design of a truly comprehensive approach that brings together humanitarian and development actors, peace-building and policy dialogue - without compromising the humanitarian principles, the core protection values and the mandate of the organization. Indeed, the focus on protection is exactly what should guide UNHCR in its crucial role as a catalyst for a renewed, innovative and partnership-based drive towards better solutions. While UNHCR should be a constructive actor in building relevant response strategies together with other key agencies, it must first and foremost be a principled watchdog that ensures that basic protection standards are upheld - by monitoring and advising and by help building relevant capacities in the countries that need them. It must not compromise on this. If it does, it will lose the ability to protect those in the greatest need.

Fortunately, there seems to be growing awareness about the need for such a new approach. The World Humanitarian Summit may well prove to be the right opportunity to bring it all together through a broad-based and inclusive dialogue - and with the Solutions

Alliance having a clear potential to be a recognized operational platform for partnerships in responding to displacement. With such promising and wide-ranging processes, we ought to be able to move forward towards a stronger, more resilient approach to responding to protracted displacement and humanitarian crises.

3. UNHCR seeks to maintain humanitarian values and protection space in the fulfillment of its mandate. *How do you see UNHCR continuing this work in the future?*

First and foremost, protection must be at the heart of everything that UNHCR does. This is UNHCR's *raison d'être*, as reflected in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol. Ultimately, it is about ensuring an unwavering focus on the dignity and wellbeing of every individual of concern to UNHCR, be they men or women, boys or girls. This must guide UNHCR in its daily work and in its pursuit of strategic goals. In this, it is obviously of critical importance to maintain protection space.

For UNHCR, this will take many forms, depending on the context. A good example is the situation in Europe right now. It is obvious that the question of refugees has become explosive at all levels of decision-making in Europe. I have no doubt that UNHCR must support the proposals from the Commission and the recent decisions in the European Council. But I also think that with the right leadership and a refined understanding of the underlying political sensitivities, UNHCR can push the discussion towards even better outcomes.

Throughout such dialogue, UNHCR must remind European leaders of the values and obligations that were agreed to in response to the refugee crisis affecting Europe after the Second World War. At the time, it was recognized that it was necessary to create a binding instrument for refugee protection – leading to the 1951 Convention. Nothing about the present situation changes that logic, and the Convention is as relevant today as it was 65 years ago. Even though more than half a million people is a huge number of individuals, Europe does have the capacity to deal with it - and to do so in full accordance with the provisions of the Convention.

Let us not forget that most displaced people are hosted by developing countries and almost half of them by poor countries. All host countries contribute to a global public good by providing protection and assistance to those in need. Middle income countries are increasingly affected as well by displacement, thus having need for international assistance. We must further the discussion on how to remove institutional barriers within donors and financial institutions in that regard.

It is deeply concerning that it is becoming more dangerous to be a humanitarian worker. This will require continued attention. I see no easy solutions to this challenge. It's almost always damned if you do (leave) and damned if you don't and eventually run too high a risk in terms of staff safety and security.

Another key aspect is that there are twice as many IDPs as refugees and that IDP's are not accorded the same level of protection. We need to deal with this situation but it remains a challenge that the international framework in relation to protection of IDP's is limited and has even diminished over recent years.

UNHCR's mandate, of course, does not extend to IDPs but the organization has a leadership role in three of the 11 humanitarian clusters; protection, shelter and camp coordination. This means that UNHCR is well placed to help drive a new momentum in the development of mechanisms to strengthen IDP protection. It might not be the right time for new international instruments but let's start to have an international conversation on IDPs.

4. The agency has at times been confronted with ambiguity in the humanitarian system regarding coordination, protection, assistance, and durable solutions – particularly in areas with mixed populations. *How do you see UNHCR fitting into the broader humanitarian and development context?*

Humanitarian crisis situations are growing ever more complex and this is also reflected in displacement patterns. The number of internally displaced is continuing to grow and so is the number of people moving for mixed reasons. Climate change plays into this, as does poverty and vulnerability in societies that have been stuck in fragility for decades. And people move in new ways, both within regions affected by conflict and to countries further away.

I have no doubt that coordination will remain challenging, and that the challenges will only continue to increase. As I see it, there is no other course but to ensure that the coordination systems remain responsive and effective, and that ambiguity is confronted head on. Mandates are extremely important as the legal basis for humanitarian action, but they cannot be exercised in isolation in complicated situations. This only underlines the need to develop genuine partnerships that reflect trust and mutual respect as a basis for utilizing existing capacities and expertise in the best possible way. This is an obligation for UNHCR and for all other humanitarian actors, be they within the UN-family or among NGOs.

I believe that the World Humanitarian Summit will be an occasion for a rich and constructive debate around these themes - and I am certain that UNHCR has a lot to offer in such a debate, based on the unique combination of a global normative role as well as partnership-based presence in the deep field.

5. Among other important criteria listed in the [vacancy announcement](#), the High Commissioner's successor must have partnership experience. UNHCR has increasingly worked through partners (nearly 1000 NGOs) to reach persons of concern on the ground. *How do you view partnership?*

UNHCR has a special role in leading the way towards new approaches when responding to protracted displacement and in finding durable solutions. However, UNHCR cannot do this alone. UNHCR is highly dependent on its partners and should be guided by a commitment to partnership, be they other UN agencies or international or national NGO's. These partners play an indispensable role in responding to displacement all over the world - and they do it with strong efficiency, expertise and commitment.

The question is, however, whether UNHCR has been able to reap the full benefits of working with these partners. Having spoken with numerous NGOs and UN organizations, I got the impression that many see UNHCR as an organization that tends primarily to deal with partners as implementing agents - focused on an agenda that is entirely controlled by UNHCR itself. Now is the time to transform operational relationships into strategic partnerships where other actors, including NGO's, are called upon to be co-responsible for ensuring protection, and for developing new innovative approaches to all aspects of displacement.

Jasmine Whitbread (United Kingdom and Switzerland)

Thank you for your commitment to support the process for selecting the best candidate for the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

This appointment comes at a time when the world is facing a profound challenge as unprecedented numbers of people flee their homes, often across national borders, to escape conflict and insecurity. The numbers of refugees and displaced people around the world are higher than ever before, and so too are the demands on our shared humanitarian system -- on governments, international institutions, NGOs, and on host communities. I don't think it's an exaggeration to describe this issue as one of the defining challenges of our generation. Either we respond to the urgent needs of the individual men, women and children at the heart of this crisis, and harness the resources, vision and will needed to manage these flows effectively and humanely. Or we withdraw from our obligations, pass responsibility on to others, and fray the fabric of the international system.

This is a matter of values. It is a call for urgent and practical action. And it is an opportunity to inspire change. This is what I am about and what I am drawn to.

I have worked for nearly 20 years in the humanitarian sector, including in conflict and fragile settings with refugees and displaced people and now leading one of the largest humanitarian agencies in the world, advocating and building relationships at the highest levels of government, business and civil society. I have consistently backed and invested in strengthened coordination of the humanitarian system. I have a strong track record of resource mobilisation in all parts of the world. My private sector background has proven invaluable both in running a tight ship and forging transformational partnerships. I am a dual Swiss/British national and have lived in Europe, Africa and the USA. I am motivated by making a difference, and believe that UNHCR, as part of the UN and wider system, can and must make that difference.

I have set out below my current perspective on your five key questions. Part of my approach when appointed to any new position of leadership is to listen carefully to the views of all stakeholders before reaching conclusions, so my responses should be read with that caveat in mind.

1. UNHCR was established in 1950, initially to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. UNHCR also has a clear mandate for stateless persons and has over time become more engaged with internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations. How do you see the role of the High Commissioner and UNHCR today?

The founding principles of UNHCR, the convention and related protocols, as well as the operating standards and best practice that have developed over time, remain as relevant as ever. At the same time, the landscape has undergone many changes, and UNHCR's role needs to continue to evolve. The high respect in which this agency is widely held presents an important opportunity for the UN, for the world and its people, at a time of change and challenge.

Today, in many parts of the world, donor countries are for the first time in generations grappling first hand with an influx of refugees. The general publics of these countries are



Photo: Save the Children

alive to the issue in a way that was never going to be the case when refugees were seen as “over there”. This presents an unparalleled opportunity to reframe the issue for good. With a complex range of stakeholders involved, UNHCR must leverage its convening, normative and advocacy powers to play a central leadership role, working with others to develop and communicate a compelling way forward. This needs to be based on existing hard-won principles, while creatively adapting to today’s challenges (such as political and funding constraints) and opportunities (such as the potential of digital technology and engagement of non-traditional partners).

The High Commissioner must be widely recognised as a credible, committed and impartial humanitarian leader, able to galvanise diverse stakeholders behind a shared vision and set of goals, using principled pragmatism to reach consensus from different starting points, driving for results while bringing people along. This requires collaborative and cross-cultural leadership and influencing skills.

The Commissioner must also be a courageous advocate and campaigner, speaking out to protect rights where others will not or cannot. Critically, the Commissioner must have the skills and experience to lead and manage a global agency, balancing life-and-death risks for staff and affected populations, while mobilising the resources needed to fulfil its mission.

2. The number of displaced persons has surpassed that witnessed in World War II. UNHCR’s current budget is only 37% funded. The High Commissioner has said the system is not broken, but it is broke. What would be your priorities in the face of many competing demands and limited resources?

Faced with competing demands and limited resources, it is crucial to first agree the wider framework that many players can contribute to, and to then be clear which elements of this UNHCR itself will focus on and where it will instead support others to step in. UNHCR should focus on what only it can do best, due to its unique leadership position – being *the* normative, convening, standard setting and monitoring body for the protection of refugee and related populations. Many essential areas of practical assistance can be taken up just as well by other actors if incentivised and monitored to reach established standards.

A creative and ambitious resource mobilisation plan can then be developed and rolled out – for UNHCR but also supporting the other players, avoiding unhelpful competition. The Commissioner needs to play a direct and personal role in this, as chief fundraiser but also tapping into the brightest minds and brokering innovative financing mechanisms to improve predictability and efficiency.

3. UNHCR seeks to maintain humanitarian values and protection space in the fulfillment of its mandate. How do you see UNHCR continuing this work in the future?

UNHCR plays a central role in upholding humanitarian values, and could do more to demystify the central concepts of humanitarianism and protection, which are too often so cloaked in jargon, acronyms and sensitivity that many practitioners struggle to understand, let alone publics or affected populations. Even within the UN system there is confusion over the pros and cons of integrated missions. UNHCR can help to change this, getting clarity and cut-through in communication of the principles and, critically, demonstrating what it means to stay true to principles in practice.

4. The agency has at times been confronted with ambiguity in the humanitarian system regarding coordination, protection, assistance, and durable solutions –

particularly in areas with mixed populations. *How do you see UNHCR fitting into the broader humanitarian and development context?*

UNHCR has the potential to be very influential in the wider humanitarian system. UNHCR should throw its full weight, with others, behind a breaking down of the artificial divide between humanitarian and development work, which risks precluding essential development work in crisis settings, such as education, or livelihoods in host communities. While this is a long-standing nut to crack, the timing is auspicious with the significant mobilisation behind the recently launched SDGs, whose agenda cannot otherwise possibly succeed.

UNHCR can also play a key role in supporting better coordination within the UN and the Commissioner should champion a strong, empowered and accountable OCHA.

5. Among other important criteria listed in the [vacancy announcement](#), the High Commissioner's successor must have partnership experience. UNHCR has increasingly worked through partners (nearly 1000 NGOs) to reach persons of concern on the ground. *How do you view partnership?*

UNHCR's mandate has never looked so challenging. Even if the agency's budget continued to double in size, it could not hope to fully address the issues we can anticipate in the coming years. The only way to begin to think about how to meet these challenges is with partnership as a starting point. This means identifying and working with key partners right at the outset of strategic planning, not just relying on them as implementing partners. And it means thinking broadly about which actors really have the potential to bring to bear transformative capability and resources – including newly engaging governments, companies and civil society – and finding ways to connect them with long-standing partners and standards.

I believe that the very difficulties of the situation we are facing may prove the galvanising force for change we need. UNHCR is well placed to help catalyse this movement, and I would aim to bring all my experience and skills to bear to ensure we do not miss this opportunity.

END