

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

Support to AU/NEPAD (Period of July 2009 to June 2010)

Collaboration with UN agencies

The reporting period saw notable progress in achieving one of the key goals of the sub-cluster on Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) chaired by UNHCR. The sub-cluster had set the goal, based on the priorities of the African Union and a request made by the AU Executive Council to concerned AU partners, to support the African Union with developing a binding legal instrument for the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and with the preparations for the first AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs. The support activities included advocacy, professional support in the preparation of background and conference papers and mobilization of resources.

Throughout the reporting period, UNHCR and other members of the sub-cluster worked closely with the AU Commission and other AU Organs, as well as with Member States, participating actively in a Technical Taskforce established by the African Union to coordinate preparations for the Special Summit, held in Kampala, Uganda from 19-23 October 2009. Heads of state and government adopted the ground-breaking African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa, as well as the Kampala Declaration and Recommendations that call upon AU Member States to take comprehensive and concrete measures to address the root causes of forced displacement. The AU Convention is the first legally binding international legal instrument relating to internal displacement covering an entire continent.

Following the conclusion of the Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs, UNHCR and members of the sub-cluster have continued to collaborate with the African Union and its Member States to expedite the signature, ratification and implementation of the Convention, the Kampala Declaration and Recommendations. The Convention will enter into force once ratified by 15 Member States. As of 24 June 2010, 28 African countries have signed the Convention and one state (Uganda) has ratified it.

In April 2010, the AU Commission developed a Plan of Action (POA) through an inclusive consultative process involving Member States, other AU Organs, UN agencies and international organizations to chart a roadmap to implement the outcomes of the AU Special Summit. The POA was submitted to the experts and ministers in charge of forced displacement matters for consideration in June 2010 and will be submitted to the 17th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and the 15th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in July for endorsement. The POA is the beginning of a long-term strategy to address the phenomenon of forced displacement in a more sustained way and serves as an implementation and accountability framework. It sets broad targets, benchmarks and indicators of achievement in the implementation process and device means to facilitate coordination, follow-up, reporting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure timely and effective implementation of the outcomes of the Special Summit. The POA also provides a focused and structured platform for interactions between AU and its partners in dealing with the challenges of forced displacement on the continent.

Financial and institutional support

During the reporting period UNHCR continued to extend the full time secondment of a professional staff member at the P4 level and a driver to the Division of Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission. In addition, UNHCR extended the full-time services of a dedicated consultant and a secretary to the same department until March 2010 to support preparations for the Special Summit and follow-up of its outcomes. Staff of the UNHCR Representation to the African Union and UNECA also collaborated with and provided support to the African Union.

A direct financial contribution of 170,000 USD was made to the AU Commission in 2008 to support the development of the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. An additional financial support of 350,000 USD was mobilized in 2009 in support of the Special Summit.

Advocacy work in support of African development

UNHCR undertook numerous advocacy activities to raise awareness about the AU Special Summit and mobilize political and financial support for its outcomes. This advocacy effort has encouraged donors and AU partners to provide approximately 715,600 USD to cover costs relating to the preparations and convening of the Special Summit.

Following a request made by the AU Commission and the government of Uganda, the host of the Special Summit, UNHCR produced advocacy materials for Special Summit including documentary videos on displaced populations in Africa. Assistance was also provided in the preparation and publication of information notes, flyers, booklets and posters highlighting the challenges facing the continent in finding durable solutions for millions of refugees and IDPs, the need for addressing the root causes and preventing forced displacement in the long term.

Working closely with members of the Peace and Security Cluster, UNHCR continued to focus on strengthening collaboration between UN Peacebuilding activities and the emerging Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development programme of the African Union. During the reporting period the Peacebuilding Commission undertook a visit to the AU Headquarters, met with the AU Peace and Security Council and exchanged views with officials of the AU Commission. The recent appointment of senior staff to head the unit in charge of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development at the AU Commission's Peace and Security Department is expected to pave the way for further effective collaboration between UNHCR, the PCRDR sub-cluster and the AU Commission on implementation of the AU PCRDR Policy adopted in 2006.

Other advocacy activities undertaken during the reporting period included collaboration with the AU and other regional organizations through participation in AU COMMIT campaign against human trafficking, development of AU guidelines on the Protection of Civilians, AU Ordinary Summits and conferences, the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) between the UN System and the African Union as well as bilateral interactions with representatives of AU Member States and partners, support to various AU organs including the Sub-Committee on

Refugees, Returnees and IDPs of the AU Permanent Representatives Committee, and the Coordinating Committee on Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and IDPs (CCAR). UNHCR was also called upon by the Peace and Security Department of the AU and Secretariat of the Panel of the Wise to participate in workshops and seminars as key speakers on the protection and assistance of women and children affected by armed conflict in the continent and on mitigating the impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Children. Various advocacy tools were used in these efforts including joint organization with the AU Commission of World Refugee Day, a quarterly newsletter entitled “Highlights from Addis, Explanatory Note on the Kampala Convention,” flyers and brochures to promote the Kampala Convention, posters and a website (<http://www.unhcr.org>) dedicated to partnership with the African Union and support to its NEPAD programme.

Impact of UNHCR’s support activities to NEPAD

The long standing and strong partnership that UNHCR enjoys with the African Union has enabled it to collaborate effectively with various organs of the AU and its Member States and support the NEPAD programme. An example of a tangible impact of historic proportions resulting from this partnership is the adoption in October 2009 of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and the Kampala Declaration and Recommendations. The new Convention, when ratified and implemented, is believed to bring about significant changes in the conditions of the millions of IDPs on the continent and will help prevent forced displacement in the future. The Convention also sets a positive international precedent in regard to the protection of IDPs worldwide.

In June 2010, UNHCR as chair of the sub-cluster on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development was invited to attend the 4th UN-AU Consultative meeting on Prevention and Management of Conflicts. The meeting focused on country-specific situations (Guinea Bissau, Sudan, Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and cross-cutting themes such as mediation, electoral assistance, early warning and conflict prevention. UNHCR underlined the spirit and relevance of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the Kampala Declaration and Recommendations during all thematic areas being considered and suggested that the AU and the UN intensify their multilateral efforts to accelerate the signature, ratification and earliest entry into force of the Convention. This suggestion has been included in the draft recommendations of the meeting.

During the reporting period, the African Union has strengthened its activities relating to the implementation of the AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development adopted in 2006. The AU Commission has recently re-initiated field assessment missions to countries emerging from conflict to assess the status of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. The assessments will seek to determine the need that post-conflict countries may have for further support to consolidate the peace and expedite progress towards sustainable development. It is recalled that the UNHCR, as convener of the sub-cluster on PCRD, produced initial assessment reports on the status of post-conflict reconstruction in twelve African countries emerging from conflict. These reports were intended to provide background and reference material for field assessment missions such as those now being undertaken by the AU in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.