

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Support to AU/NEPAD (Period of July 2010 to June 2011)

Collaboration with UN agencies

The reporting period observed notable progress in achieving some of the key social, economic and political priorities of the African Union to promote and strengthen continental, regional and national measures for peace, stability and development. Such includes the growing number of member states who have signed and ratified the Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention) within 18 months of its adoption. A total of 31 signatories and 10 ratifications have been secured, which is testimony to the seriousness with which Africa, home to around half of the global total of internally displaced persons (IDPs), considers conflict prevention, peace and stability as imperatives to the continent's development. Member states who have ratified and deposited the ratification instrument at the AU are Uganda, Zambia, Sierra Leone and Gabon, whereas those who have ratified but yet to deposit the instrument of ratification are Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Gambia, Somalia and Togo. UNHCR and partners continue to advocate with member states that have ratified the Convention to immediately deposit the Ratification instrument at the AU in order to support and facilitate the entry into force of the Convention.

In addition, UNHCR together with UN Agencies and Civil Society Organisations continue to advocate for the speedy signature, ratification and implementation of the Kampala Convention and the 52 recommendations set forth in the Kampala Declaration adopted at the AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa in October 2009.

Collaboration with the above mentioned partners continued throughout the reporting period to realize the Plan of Action for implementation of the Outcomes of the Kampala Special Summit. The Plan of Action was endorsed by the AU Executive Council during the July 2010 AU Summit in Kampala (Exec Council Decision 19-23/07/2010). Linked to the AU Strategic Plan 2009 to 2012, it is built on the pillars of peace and security, shared values, institutional and capacity building. Its goal is to address root causes and the challenges of forced displacement so as to contribute towards sustainable peace, security and development in the continent. It serves as an implementation and accountability framework and provides a focused and structured platform for interaction between AU and its partners in dealing with the challenges of forced displacement in Africa. The Plan of Action is divided into two broad areas. Activities during the reporting period focused on the first area of the plan, mainly on short-term activities aimed at promoting the speedy signature, ratification/accession and domestication of the Kampala Convention. The second area addresses medium to long-term interventions aimed at preventing and addressing root causes of forced displacement in Africa, as well as durable solutions and assistance to affected populations. It is anticipated that more activities will be identified in the process of developing detailed annual work plans.

To expedite the signature, ratification and domestication of the Convention in line with implementation of the Plan of Action, UNHCR in collaboration with OSSREA (*the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa*) and in support of the AU, organised a High Level Seminar to Support the AU Plan of Action for the implementation of the Outcomes of the Kampala Special Summit. The seminar was attended by approximately 120 participants ranging from Ministers from member states to high level government officials, mid-level

technocrats, UN partners and other International Agencies and civil society organisations. The Seminar provided a multi-lateral forum to discuss the challenges and strategies on ratifying and implementing the Kampala Convention and the Kampala Declaration. It also provided a forum to discuss the roles of various actors in comprehensive peace building efforts and post-conflict reconstruction activities including in the search for durable solutions for displaced populations. The Seminar resulted in a set of actionable recommendations and conclusions which will be implemented at the national, regional and continental levels.

In support of the AU Year of Peace 2010, UNHCR in collaboration with other UN and International Agencies supported communication and outreach activities to advance the cause of peace at various levels, including a photo exhibition to raise awareness on the impact armed conflict has had on women and children on the continent. Some twelve UNHCR offices in, in collaboration with its partners, commemorated the African Year of Peace by organising various peace education, sports and cultural initiatives aimed at promoting peace and also distributed additional humanitarian supplies to the most vulnerable displaced population as a sign of solidarity to end displacement in the continent.

In addition to collaborating with OHCHR in efforts to assist the AUC in the development of a comprehensive human rights strategy for Africa, UNHCR has also worked closely with the AUC and other UN partners in the development of the AU Guidelines for the Protection of Civilian in AU peace operations. This is to ensure that the guidelines conform to International Humanitarian Law principles and take into account refugee protection concerns as well as the specific needs of forcibly displaced populations. UNHCR has also expanded engagement with the newly-established African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL), considering that the development and promotion of international law is integral to the development of Africa.

UNHCR is also a member of several clusters under the RCM (UN/AU Ten Year capacity building programme), including the Communications and Advocacy cluster chaired by OSAA which aims to improve information and communications strategies for NEPAD programmes. UNHCR also worked closely with the various sub-clusters under the RCM cluster on Social and Human Development chaired by the various UN programmes and co-chaired by the AUC. In collaboration with IOM, UNODC and ILO, UNHCR supported the AU Social Affairs Department in launching the AU COMMIT campaign in the IGAD and EAC regions during the reporting period. The campaign aims at raising awareness and enhancing continental, regional and national cooperation towards tackling trafficking in persons, especially in women and children. In addition, UNHCR worked closely with UNIFEM and UNICEF in continental programmes related to the protection and assistance of women and children affected by armed conflict and on mitigating the impact of armed conflict on women and children. UNHCR was called upon by the *Club de Madrid*, in a seminar organised by UNIFEM, to raise awareness on the situation of refugee women and children in the continent affected by conflict and displacement. Increasingly, UNHCR has also been approached 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 in conflict situations including on the protection and security situation of nomadic populations in the continent.

With regards to improving Africa's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS), UNHCR collaborated with the UNECA and other UN Agencies in organising the first ever Ministerial Conference on CRVS during the reporting period. The Conference resulted in a Declaration of Ministers and a set of actionable Recommendations for improving CRVS systems of member

states, which of relevance to UNHCR is the inclusion of marginalised populations in national CRVS systems and development portfolios.

UNHCR called on African governments during the 4th Joint Annual Meetings of the AU and ECA Conference of Ministers of Economy, Finance and Planning to formulate and implement equitable and inclusive social policies and strategies that support the protection of vulnerable populations. A maiden resolution was adopted whereby governments pledged their commitment to addressing social concerns such as wide spread poverty and massive youth unemployment whilst mainstreaming gender issues in governing development and economic transformation as well as addressing the needs of vulnerable groups such as refugees, IDPs, the youth, the elderly and children.

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. Staff of the UNHCR Representation to the African Union and UNECA also collaborated with and provided support to the African Union in meeting the various priorities of the African Union.

In support of the AU, the UNHCR / OSSREA High Level Seminar to promote the AU Plan of Action for the implementation of the Outcomes of the Kampala Special Summit, UNHCR provided financial support (USD 130,000) towards the organization of the Seminar. In addition, UNHCR also contributed to printing costs for documents related to the Outcomes of the Kampala Special Summit and on other advocacy and awareness raising materials on the situation of forced displaced populations in the continent including on the AU COMMIT campaign strategy document on trafficking-in-persons.

UNHCR provided support to the AUCIL to hire a Consultant to develop a Model Law on the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention) which will be shared with member states to ease the domestication and implementation process. The model Law is expected to be completed by September 2011 and a meeting of Legal Experts from the continent will be organised by the AUCIL to promote the Model Law.

Advocacy work in support of African Development

UNHCR undertook numerous advocacy activities to raise awareness on the AU Special Summit and to mobilize political and financial support for the implementation of its outcomes. In addition to activities highlighted in Para 1 above, UNHCR has also worked with the African-Parliamentary Union to call for their support in ensuring that forced displacement matters affecting peace and stability and development in the continent gain the necessary attention of all stakeholders.

Following requests made by the African Union Commission's Peace and Security and Political Affairs Departments', UNHCR produced advocacy materials to raise awareness on the challenges faced by displaced populations in Africa. UNHCR also participated in the Seventh African Development Forum (*ADF VII*) to advocate for enhanced assessment and research on the potential consequences of climate change on populations who are already of concern to UNHCR including on the additional human displacement scenarios which climate change will cause.

UNHCR called for appropriate preparedness, adaptation and coping mechanisms to be in place soonest so as to mitigate the consequences climate change is likely to have on development efforts in the continent.

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 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.

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 effectively collaborate 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, the Kampala Declaration and Recommendations. The new Convention, which has within 18 months of its adoption gained 31 signatures and 10 ratifications, is expected to bring about significant changes in the conditions of the millions of IDPs in the continent and the prevention of forced displacement in the future. The Convention also sets a positive international precedent in regard to the protection of IDPs worldwide. Fifteen ratifications by AU Member States are needed to bring the Kampala Convention into force.

UNHCR's engagement with partners in support of the AU's priorities, as outlined above, are geared towards supporting continental efforts to attain peace and stability and enhance development. Activities to raise awareness on the situation of women and children affected by armed conflict to the inclusion of marginalised populations in national CRVS systems are all aimed at supporting comprehensive, integrated development on the continent and addressing key social, economic and political priorities that will accelerate the integration of the African Continent into the global economy.