

Third International Conference on Financing for Development

Statement by UNHCR, Addis Ababa, 16 July 2016

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

On behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, I am honoured for this opportunity to contribute to the discussions on financing for development.

It is important that the voice and the needs of the forcibly displaced people is heard and taking into account at this meeting as they are amongst the most vulnerable and poorest.

Humanitarian action and development are closely intertwined: Conflicts destroy hard won development gains. Likewise, effective sustainable development can help prevent conflicts from occurring and build the resilience of affected populations in coping with violent shocks.

The world today is marred by natural disasters, conflict and violence affecting 1.5 billion people globally. Today, we are facing the highest number of forcibly displaced persons since the Second World War, nearly 60 million people, of which 38 million are displaced inside their own country.

Last year alone, the number of newly displaced due to conflict and persecution was nearly 14 million. Every day, 42,000 people decide to flee and leave everything behind – almost four times the 2010 number of 11,000.

The vast majority of refugees and displaced persons, some 86 per cent, live in the poorest countries. Despite the development challenges these countries face, they have generously offered hospitality, contrary to what we witness in many developed countries.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the host of this conference, Ethiopia, for its open door policy and generous hospitality to more than 650,000 refugees from neighbouring countries. Ethiopia hosts the largest number of refugees on the African continent.

At the same time, the number of refugees and IDPs who were able to return home has been amongst the lowest ever. A mere 126,000 refugees returned home in 2014.

It is remarkable that nearly 45 per cent of refugees have been living in a protracted situation – the average refugee situation lasts more than 20 years. Consequently, nearly 80 per cent of humanitarian spending went to protracted emergencies.

These statistics signal the failure of the international community to prevent conflicts from occurring and find solutions and offer hope for the increasing numbers of people forcibly displaced.

Net official development assistance from DAC countries amounted to USD 135.1 billion in 2013. Of this, only USD 22 billion was for humanitarian assistance.

Today, humanitarian needs have never been higher, but the resources available have not kept pace. Consequently, the gap between available resources and needs is the highest ever. For UNHCR this gap amounts to more than USD 4.5 billion today.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

The outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development offers a unique opportunity to help meet the challenges we face.

We welcome the focus on conflict and fragile states. However, UNHCR regrets that refugees and displaced persons are not specifically mentioned in the SDG goals and targets. We must ensure, therefore, that we give true meaning to the phrase that ‘no one is left behind’ and include refugees, IDPs and stateless persons in programmes aimed at achieving the post 2015 goals.

We also need to ensure greater coherence between development and humanitarian action. Too often, humanitarian actors are obliged to offer emergency assistance in protracted situations. The focus on reducing vulnerability and on enhancing resilience offer an opportunity to ensure that displaced persons have access to national services, such as health and education and can become self-reliant, pending a durable solution. Refugees want to contribute to host communities, and not be viewed as a burden.

Finally, the linkages between financing for development and of humanitarian action must also be recognized. Funding is a scarce resource and must be used effectively and transparently. We look forward to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, established by the UN Secretary-General. Financing of humanitarian action should not be based on short-term emergency funding, but instead on predictable, sustainable and multi-year funding. Humanitarian agencies can learn from the innovative financing models that were discussed during this meeting.

Next year’s World Humanitarian Summit is an opportunity to build on the outcome of this meeting.

A truly universal humanitarian system, encompassing different humanitarian traditions and respecting humanitarian principles and based on national ownership, will contribute toward achieving the post-2015 agenda.

Thank you.