

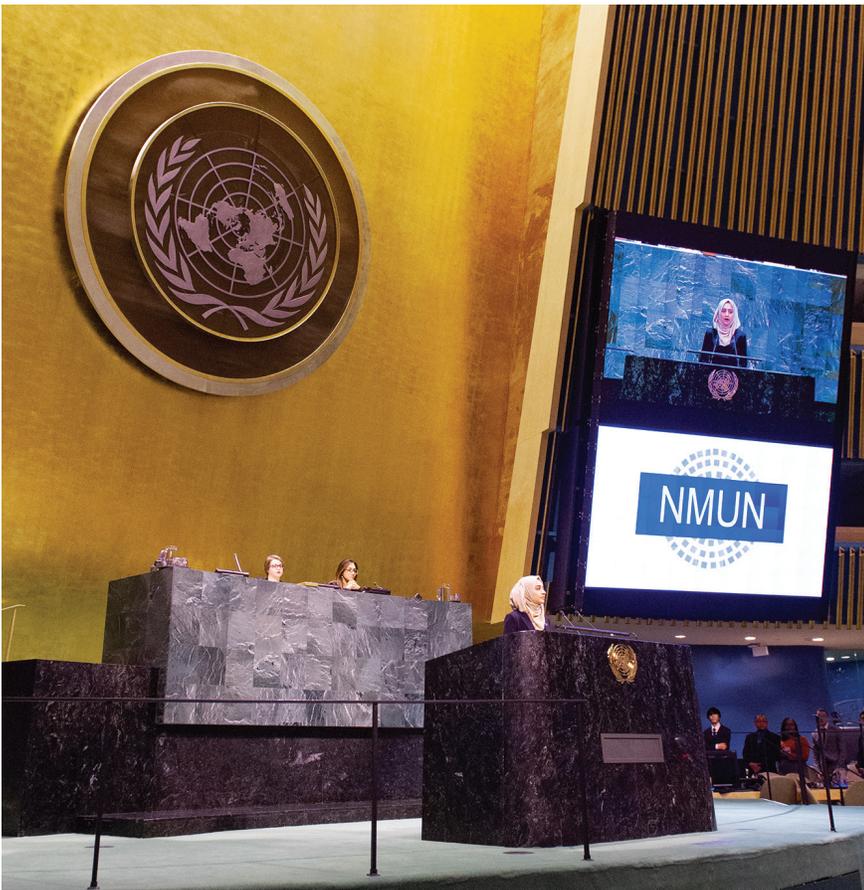


New York City, NY, USA  
28 March - 1 April (Conf. A) / 5-9 April (Conf. B)



# United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Background Guide 2021

Written and updated by: Christopher Duggan and Jasym Mireles Venegas, Directors  
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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2021 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This year's staff is: Directors Christopher W. Duggan (Conference A) and Jasym Mireles (Conference B), and Assistant Directors Johanna Günkel (Conference A) and Kimberly Sanchez (Conference B). Jasym graduated with a Bachelor in Business Administration in Finance from The University of Texas at Austin. He is currently a Finance & Strategy Analyst at Hewlett-Packard Enterprise. Christopher is finishing a B.S. in Public Administration at St. Petersburg College and will pursue a Master of Public Administration degree at the University of South Florida in 2021. Johanna recently graduated from the University of Erfurt with a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations and Social Sciences. Kimberly completed her BS in Linguistics focusing on translation and interpretation from the University of San Carlos de Guatemala. She is currently working for a transnational corporation.

The topics under discussion for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are:

- I. Forced Displacement Due to Climate Change
- II. Ensuring Access to Safe and Sustainable Energy
- III. Improving Employment Opportunities for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The UNHCR is a global organization which works to save lives, protects rights and build better futures for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. Considering there are at least 79.5 million people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes, the UNHCR is a crucial committee within the United Nations (UN) system. The agency however suffers from financial constraints that harm the effectiveness of its work. It is paramount that delegates take this into account as well as carefully reviewing the mandate, governance and work of the UNHCR to understand what actions and milestones can realistically be achieved.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2021 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the HRHA Department, Ismail Dogar (Conference A) and Tobias Dietrich (Conference B), at [usg.hrha@nmun.org](mailto:usg.hrha@nmun.org).

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

## Conference A

Christopher W. Duggan, *Director*  
Johanna Günkel, *Assistant Director*

## Conference B

Jasym Mireles, *Director*  
Kimberly Sanchez, *Assistant Director*

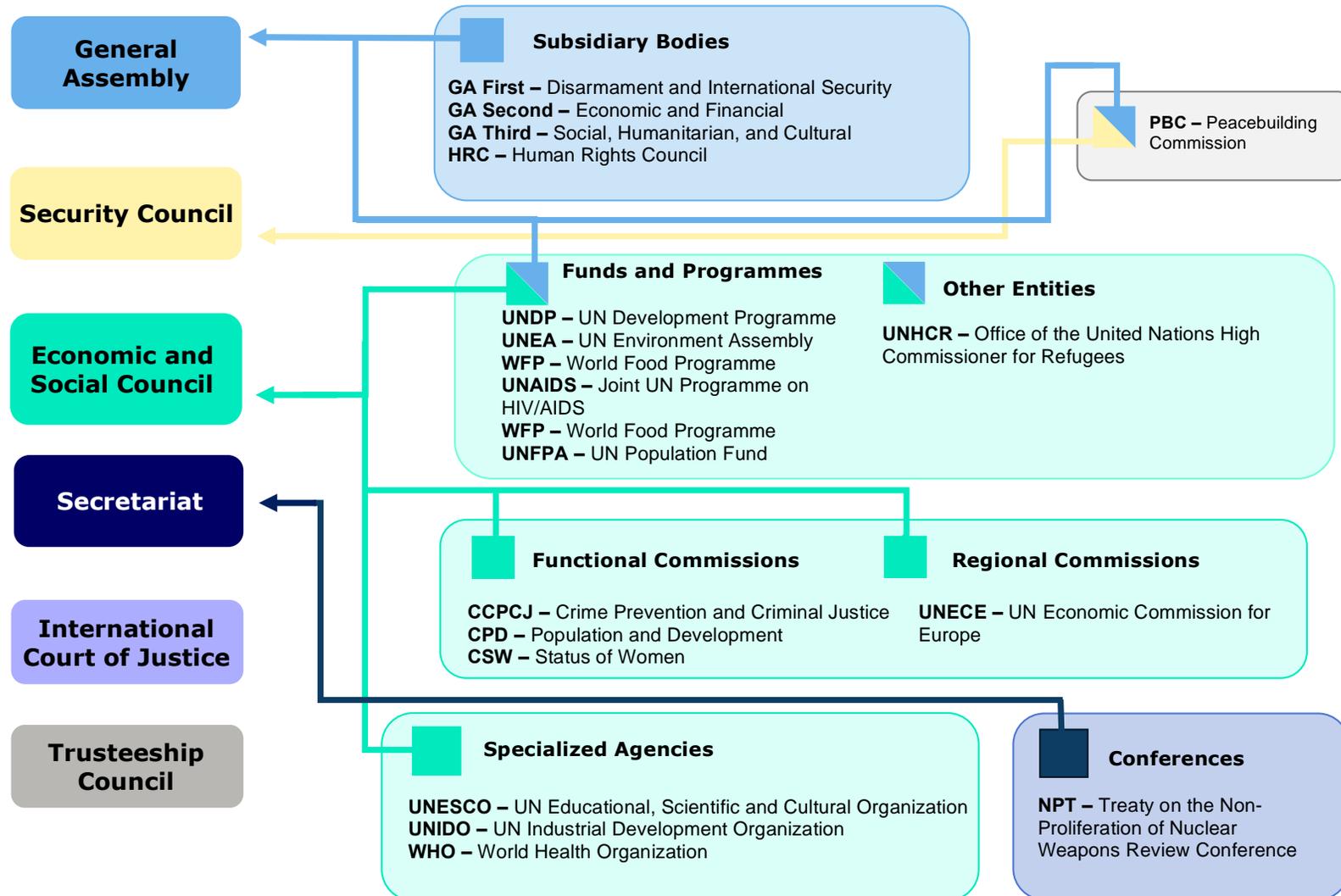


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## United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



## Committee Overview

### Introduction

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations (UN) agency whose primary purpose is the protection of the welfare and rights of refugees.<sup>1</sup> The UN General Assembly established the body in 1950 to address the high number of displaced Europeans after World War II and gave the body a three year mandate.<sup>2</sup> However, the General Assembly soon began proposing various resolutions to extend UNHCR's work to groups of people not included in its original scope.<sup>3</sup> UNHCR's first significant emergency followed a violent Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956, and highlighted its essential role in delivering aid to those fleeing and seeking refuge in neighboring states.<sup>4</sup> During the subsequent decades, UNHCR further expanded its reach to Africa, Asia, and Latin America in response to the displacing violence of ethnic cleansing, organized crime, and armed groups.<sup>5</sup> Due to the need for UNHCR's continued work, the General Assembly decided in 2003 to prolong UNHCR's mandate indefinitely.<sup>6</sup>

Most of UNHCR's resources are dedicated to field operations that address the needs of forcibly displaced persons, including 26 million refugees, 45.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 4.2 million stateless people, and 4.2 million asylum seekers.<sup>7</sup> A refugee is a person who, fearing conflict or persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, sexuality, gender identity/expression, or political conviction, has left the state of their nationality or habitual residence.<sup>8</sup> Whether they are unable or unwilling to go back to previous residences, refugees are protected under international law from forced return to conditions that may risk their lives and/or freedom.<sup>9</sup> IDPs differ, because while they have had to flee their homes, they have not crossed an international border, which often makes them more difficult to reach.<sup>10</sup> Stateless people have been denied a nationality due to discrimination, state succession, or conflict, and subsequently suffer limited access to employment, medical attention, education, and overall freedom of movement.<sup>11</sup> Asylum seekers are those looking for protection in a different state, but whose claim for refugee status has not been processed.<sup>12</sup> UNHCR also aids returnees, those who voluntarily return to their states of origin after fleeing.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the rising number of "forced migration" victims in the last 10 years, from roughly 40 million to almost 80 million, may be attributed to deteriorating socioeconomic situations and ongoing conflicts that lead to protracted displacement.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, in 2019 alone, UNHCR reported that there were 11 million people newly displaced.<sup>15</sup>

UNHCR provides a variety of humanitarian aid, including food and nutritional supplements, basic and long-term shelter and housing, cash assistance, and legal services.<sup>16</sup> While immediate assistance in crises constitutes a large portion of the body's work, UNHCR's larger goal is to help refugees find durable

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, *What We Do*, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*, 1949; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, *Americas*, 2020; UNHCR, *Asia and the Pacific*, 2020; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly, *Implementing Actions Proposed by UNHCR to Strengthen the Capacity of His Office to Carry Out its Mandate (A/RES/58/153)*, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, *Executive Committee*, 2020; UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020; UNHCR, *Who We Help*, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010; UNHCR, *Refugees*, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020; UNHCR, *Refugees*, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, *Ending Statelessness*, 2020; UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, *Asylum-Seekers*, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, *Returnees*, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> IOM, *Glossary on Migration*, 2019; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, 2020, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, 2020, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR, *Protection*, 2020.

solutions to rebuild their lives.<sup>17</sup> From 1945 to 1985, UNHCR focused mainly on resettlement, which is the transfer of refugees from an asylum state to a different one willing to grant them permanent settlement.<sup>18</sup> As the causes of displacement increasingly varied, the agency began to utilize the concept of voluntary repatriation, the refugees' voluntary return to their state of origin.<sup>19</sup> As the number of cases related to refugees seeking to return home expanded during the 1990s, UNHCR's role in reintegration into home states evolved to include infrastructure and community development, as well as an increased focus on reconciliation and peacebuilding in affected communities.<sup>20</sup> For cases in which repatriation is not feasible, UNHCR focuses its efforts on refugee integration into host states; this includes economic, legal, social, and cultural components and often the granting of asylum or citizenship, when possible.<sup>21</sup> The protection of stateless persons' rights to nationality constitutes a large portion of UNHCR's work and is carried out through providing support for more inclusive nationality laws, facilitating birth registration and certificates, and assisting in overcoming civil registration obstacles.<sup>22</sup>

Given the extensive resources needed by host communities for the above strategies, the UN General Assembly adopted the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration) in 2016, committing global support and responsibility in dealing with the large numbers of forcibly displaced persons.<sup>23</sup> It established the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF), a global-scale plan to guarantee refugees their rights and the predominant framing tool for UNHCR's *Global Compact for Refugees* (Global Compact).<sup>24</sup> The Global Compact, which was drafted in 2018 and affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 2019, is the UN's current major agreement detailing an international approach to aiding refugees.<sup>25</sup> Another major guiding framework is UNHCR's *Strategic Directions 2017-2021*.<sup>26</sup> Within this document, UNHCR outlines its "five core directions" – protect, respond, include, empower, and solve – in its pursuit to develop the comprehensive approaches in the CRRF and the Global Compact.<sup>27</sup>

### **Governance, Structure, and Membership**

UNHCR, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, currently employs over 17,324 national and international staff members across 135 Member States.<sup>28</sup> Since its inception in 1950, UNHCR has increased its initial \$300,000 budget to \$8,667,700,000 in 2019 to address the needs of the 79.5 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide.<sup>29</sup> UNHCR falls under the UN Programmes and Funds, reports annually to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and is governed by the Member States that make up its Executive Committee (ExCom).<sup>30</sup> The ExCom approves the agency's annual program priorities and budget.<sup>31</sup> Member States are elected by ECOSOC as members of the ExCom according to equitable geographical allocations.<sup>32</sup> The ExCom was originally comprised of 24 members, but has since grown to 106 Member States.<sup>33</sup> The committee reports directly to the General Assembly

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<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, *Solutions*, 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Chimni, *From Resettlement to Involuntary Repatriation*, 1999, p. 1; UNHCR, *Resettlement*, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Chimni, *From Resettlement to Involuntary Repatriation*, 1999, p. 1; UNHCR, *What We Do*, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Macrae, *Aiding Peace ... and War: UNHCR, Returnee Reintegration, and the Relief-Development Debate*, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> UNHCR, *Local Integration*, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report 2019*, 2020, pp. 73, 133, 169.

<sup>23</sup> UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-24; UNHCR, *The Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR Quick Guide*, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> UN, General Assembly, *Part II: Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12(PartII))*, 2018; UNHCR, *Global Refugee Forum*, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Stateless Persons (A/RES/319 (IV))*, 1949; UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020; UNHCR ExCom, *Update on Budgets and Funding (2019, 2020-2021)*, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> New Zealand, *United Nations Handbook 2019-20*, 2019, p. 258; UNHCR, *Governance and Oversight*, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR, *ExCom Plenary Sessions*, 2020; UNHCR, *Executive Committee's Membership by Year of Admission of Members*, 2019.

Third Committee, and follows directives issued by either the General Assembly or ECOSOC.<sup>34</sup> The ExCom meets every October to review financial matters for the coming year, advise the High Commissioner, authorize appeals for funds, and approve upcoming targets for UNHCR.<sup>35</sup> In 1995, the ExCom created a Standing Committee, which meets three times per year to discuss the work of the body as a whole and any new situations that arise.<sup>36</sup> In January 2016, the General Assembly elected Filippo Grandi as the High Commissioner to serve a five-year term ending December 2020.<sup>37</sup> Grandi works in close collaboration with the Senior Executive Team, comprised of the Deputy High Commissioner, Kelly Clements, the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, Raouf Mazou, and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Gillian Triggs.<sup>38</sup>

UNHCR's USD 8,667,700,000 budget rests on four pillars: refugees, stateless people, reintegration programs, and Global IDP Projects.<sup>39</sup> The budget stems almost entirely from voluntary donations by Member States, intergovernmental institutions, corporations, foundations, and individuals worldwide.<sup>40</sup> To acquire these donations, UNHCR releases an annual Global Appeal that provides detailed information regarding the major areas of concern for UNHCR, as well as supplementary appeals that address specific situations.<sup>41</sup> The budget also includes contributions from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for situations requiring immediate response, such as a natural disaster or violent conflict.<sup>42</sup>

### **Mandate, Function, and Powers**

The basis for UNHCR's mandate is Article 14 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), which specifically recognizes the right of all individuals to seek asylum in another state.<sup>43</sup> The founding document of UNHCR is General Assembly resolution 428 (V), known as the *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (1950).<sup>44</sup> Here, UNHCR's mandate is defined as: "providing international protection, under the auspices of the United Nations, to refugees who fall within the scope of the present Statute and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees by assisting Governments and ... private organizations to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, or their assimilation within new national communities."<sup>45</sup>

Other fundamental documents for UNHCR include the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which defines the term "refugee" as well as the rights and obligations of refugees, and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, which expanded the 1951 convention and UNHCR's mandate to include refugees from conflicts occurring after 1951.<sup>46</sup> UNHCR's mandate also includes other groups, such as stateless people, as defined in the 1954 *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* and the 1961 *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the 1998 *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, adopted by ECOSOC, outline the rights and protections for IDPs and highlights UNHCR's authority toward IDPs.<sup>48</sup> In 2007, the ExCom adopted the policy framework and implementation strategy titled *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response to*

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR, *ExCom Membership by Admission of Members*, 2020.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; UNHCR, *Executive Committee*, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, *Standing Committee Meetings*, 2020.

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR, *The High Commissioner*, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR, *Senior Executive Team*, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR ExCom, *Update on budgets and funding (2019, 2020-2021)*, 2020.

<sup>40</sup> UNHCR, *Donors*, 2020; UNHCR, *Partnerships*, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, *The Global Appeal and Supplementary Appeals*, 2020; UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2020-2021*, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> UNHCR, *UN Sister Organizations*, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010; UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>44</sup> UNHCR, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 2010, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 2010; UNHCR, *History of UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> UNHCR, *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*, 1961; UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, 1954; UNHCR, *Ending Statelessness*, 2020.

<sup>48</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2)*, 1998.

*Situations of Internal Displacement.*<sup>49</sup> This framework emphasizes the agency's primary responsibility to refugees and stipulates that aid to IDPs must be given in collaboration with national governments, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other UN agencies.<sup>50</sup> The mandate of UNHCR was further expanded in the 2011 ExCom report entitled *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons Affected by Natural Disasters.*<sup>51</sup> The report emphasizes UNHCR's primary focus on conflict-related disasters, and that its role in natural disaster relief should be complementary, not supplementary, to Member State operations.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, UNHCR has been involved in multiple thematic and regional consultations, such as delivering key messages for fostering a more inclusive humanitarian system and bridging the humanitarian-development divide.<sup>53</sup> In line with these activities, the Secretary-General called for the first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), held on 23-24 May 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey.<sup>54</sup> At the WHS, participants highlighted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) to overcome the humanitarian-development divide, meaning the lack of coordination between overlapping agencies of humanitarian and development aid.<sup>55</sup> Further, as pointed out in its preliminary guidance note titled *UNHCR and the 2030 Agenda – Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), UNHCR has been uniquely positioned to leverage the 17 SDGs for the benefit of refugees, IDPs, asylum seekers, and stateless people worldwide.<sup>56</sup> Within the scope of UNHCR in NMUN 2021, the main SDGs are SDG 7 for Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 8 for Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 13 for Climate Action.<sup>57</sup>

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

UNHCR held its 70<sup>th</sup> ExCom session from 7 to 11 October 2019.<sup>58</sup> The ExCom's debate focused on several topics, including reviewing budget priorities, setting forth the 2020-2021 targets, and discussing statelessness in detail during the High-level Segment on Statelessness.<sup>59</sup> The Segment on Statelessness marked the halfway point of the #IBelong campaign, UNHCR's primary campaign aimed at ending statelessness by 2024.<sup>60</sup> During this segment, Member States discussed the steps they have taken to end statelessness, their challenges, and their future goals so that UNHCR may continue working towards the original goals set forth in the #IBelong campaign.<sup>61</sup> Further, Member States at the 70<sup>th</sup> Session highlighted the need to include climate change as a factor for displacement, and noted the importance of inclusive partnerships to minimize the effect of climate change on refugees.<sup>62</sup> To ensure the creation of durable solutions for refugees, ExCom re-emphasized its commitment to decentralization and regionalization – that is, the process through which UNHCR supports regional bodies in their localized efforts to mediate problems and assist refugees.<sup>63</sup> Further, UNHCR's Standing Committee held their 77<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> UNHCR ExCom, *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response to Situations of Internal Displacement: Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy*, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR ExCom, *UNHCR's Role in Support of an Enhanced Humanitarian Response for the Protection of Persons Affected by Natural Disasters*, 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR, *Annual Consultations with NGOs*, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> UN OCHA, *Commitments to Action: World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR, *Strategic partnerships, including coordination and the World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016, pp. 6-7; UN OCHA, *Commitments to Action: World Humanitarian Summit*, 2016.

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2020.

<sup>57</sup> UNDP, *Sustainable Development Goals*, 2020.

<sup>58</sup> UNHCR, *2019 Executive Committee Session*, 2020.

<sup>59</sup> UNHCR, *Report of the Seventieth Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme*, 2019, p. 4; UNHCR, *High-Level Segment on Statelessness*, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> UNHCR, *#IBelong*, 2020.

<sup>61</sup> UNHCR, *Provisional Agenda and Annotations*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> UNHCR, *Report of the Seventieth Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme*, 2019, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

and 78<sup>th</sup> Sessions in March and July 2020, respectively, which provided updates on themes like voluntary repatriation, regional updates, resettlement, budget and funding, and other focus areas.<sup>64</sup>

Moreover, one year after historically affirming the Global Compact, UNHCR and strategic stakeholders met from 17-18 December 2019 at the first-ever Global Refugee Forum (GRF) with the goal of turning global responsibility into tangible actions to aid refugees.<sup>65</sup> Attended by over 3,000 participants, including Member States, the private sector, NGOs, religious entities, academia, and civil society, the GRF represents the largest-ever gathering on refugee-related matters.<sup>66</sup> Overall, the GRF had six areas of focus: energy and infrastructure, jobs and livelihoods, education, burden and responsibility sharing, protection, and solutions.<sup>67</sup> The outcome of the GRF resulted in an estimated 1,400 pledges across diverse themes, including financial and employment support, investments in infrastructure and clean energy, improved support for host regions, and educational opportunities for refugee children.<sup>68</sup>

UNHCR emphasized that many of these GRF commitments are directly relevant to aiding vulnerable refugees in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, UNHCR highlighted that GRF pledges relating to the livelihoods of refugees must urgently be turned into real outcomes, specifically strengthening local capacities to provide sanitation and hygiene, health care, clean water, and economic safety nets for refugees.<sup>70</sup> As part of their COVID-19 response, UNHCR has requested an additional \$745 million to meet the needs of refugees worldwide, many of whom are often in low to middle-income countries that have increased susceptibility to the consequences of COVID-19.<sup>71</sup> Thus far, the committee has been able to procure 23.9 million masks, deliver 250 metric tons of medical equipment, and distribute \$50 million cash-related assistance to over 1 million refugees, yet there is more work to be done by UNHCR and its partners to successfully meet the needs of refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>72</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As the number of refugees increases year after year, there is a pressing need to mobilize support worldwide and to create durable, long-term solutions for refugees.<sup>73</sup> UNHCR's recent work exemplifies the 2030 Agenda's goal to encompass all and "leave no one behind" in the greater international agenda.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, durable solutions are the key for finding greater synergy between the humanitarian and development fields.<sup>75</sup> The CRRF, the Global Compact, and the GRF have provided unique pathways to address many of the issues faced by refugees today, marking a historic first step in achieving UNHCR's objectives.<sup>76</sup>

### **Annotated Bibliography**

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*. Retrieved 26 August 2019 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/excom/announce/5894558d4/unhcrs-strategic-directions-2017-2021.html>

*This publication breaks down UNHCR's agenda between 2017-2021. After laying out the statistics and challenges currently facing refugees, the document outlines the body's declarations of work within its five core directions: protect, respond, include, empower,*

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<sup>64</sup> UNHCR, *77th meeting of the Standing Committee*, 2020; UNHCR, *78th meeting of the Standing Committee*, 2020.

<sup>65</sup> UNHCR, *2019 Global Refugee Forum*, 2020.

<sup>66</sup> UNHCR, *Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2019*, 2020, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> UNHCR, *COVID-19 Situation*, 2020.

<sup>72</sup> UNHCR, *Coronavirus Outbreak*, 2020.

<sup>73</sup> UNHCR, *A Message to the World's Refugees from UNHCR Chief Filippo Grandi*, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2020-2021*, 2020.

<sup>75</sup> UNHCR, *Partnerships*, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2020-2021*, 2020.

*and solve. The last section, “Making it Work,” provides details on the logistical and technological components needed in all five conceptual areas of focus. Delegates should use this source for a more concrete understanding of UNHCR’s goals and its plans to achieve them.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *The Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR Quick Guide*. Retrieved 26 August 2019 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/5b6d574a7>

*UNHCR compiled this quick guide as a comprehensive reference outlining the work of the Global Compact. It delineates the historical steps leading up to the proposed compact released in July 2018 and also summarizes the essential components of the compact including how it will work upon its adoption at the General Assembly’s seventy-third session. Delegates should use this source to ground their understanding of this monumental document so that they can utilize the framework in prospective resolutions. Delegates can find the link to the advanced version of the full Global Compact on Refugees in the bibliography section.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *UNHCR Global Appeal 2020-2021*. Retrieved 18 August 2020 from:

[https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2020/pdf/Global\\_Appeal\\_2020\\_full\\_lowres.pdf](https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2020/pdf/Global_Appeal_2020_full_lowres.pdf)

*UNHCR regularly produces its Global Appeal, and this document is the latest for the years 2020-2021. As a document geared primarily towards donors, it outlines the financial requirements of the body’s work for the upcoming year. It also more specifically underlines the hurdles UNHCR and its partners face in their efforts to address humanitarian crises. Delegates should use this document to bolster their understanding of current UNHCR financial priorities and the challenges it faces in carrying out programs.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *UNHCR Global Report 2019*. Retrieved 18 August 2020 from:

[https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2019/pdf/GR2019\\_English\\_Full\\_lowres.pdf](https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/gr2019/pdf/GR2019_English_Full_lowres.pdf)

*This annual report covers UNHCR’s work completed in 2019. Following an overview of the year, the report includes regional summaries and thematic updates in sections “Safeguarding Fundamental Rights,” “Responding with Lifesaving Support,” and “Building Better Futures.” This document reviews the responsibilities of UNHCR as well as the body’s Global Strategic Priorities for 2019. The report then provides detailed analysis on the body’s most recent successes and areas of improvement. It is a vital document for delegates’ understanding of the progress of UNHCR’s ongoing efforts and the areas still requiring resolutions to challenges.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *Outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum 2019*. Retrieved 18 August 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/5ecd458c4>

*This source provides an overview of the thematic focus areas, priorities, challenges, and outcome pledges of the GRF. Following the Executive Summary, this document provides information on the “Whole of Society” effort, which is the approach the international community is undertaking to engage all stakeholders in helping refugees. Further, regional summaries are included, which may allow delegates to understand how their Member State region participated in the GRF. Overall, delegates may leverage this source to understand the current priorities and action items that both UNHCR and the international community are undertaking to aid refugees and IDPs.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session. (2016). *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. Retrieved 18 August 2020 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/1>

*This General Assembly resolution provides the New York Declaration, calling for the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the development of a Global Compact on Refugees to be headed by UNHCR. Delegates should use this document to understand the UN’s position on refugee and migration issues, as well as a reference for the commitments to solidify a global approach to the*

*growing numbers of refugees made by the General Assembly, and how UNHCR will be instrumental in executing them. More specifically, it places the topic of refugee and migration populations within the context of the 2030 Agenda. Delegates can find details regarding the CRRF and the global compact in Annex 1 of the resolution.*

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## I. Forced Displacement Due to Climate Change

*“Climate change is the defining challenge of our times: a challenge which interacts with and reinforces the other global megatrends such as population growth, urbanization, and growing food, water and energy insecurity. It is a challenge which is adding to the scale and complexity of human displacement: and a challenge that has important implications for the maintenance of international peace and security.”<sup>77</sup>*

### **Introduction**

Throughout the world, weather related disasters are occurring in greater frequency and with higher intensity as a result of climate change.<sup>78</sup> According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, an increase in natural disasters and weather related incidents forces an average of 21.8 million people from their homes annually, with vulnerable populations facing a higher risk of forced displacement.<sup>79</sup> Climate change and natural disasters are straining natural resources, with crops and livestock struggling to survive in climates where conditions have been severely altered.<sup>80</sup> Such change is threatening everyday life and food security and is forcing many to look elsewhere for improved living conditions.<sup>81</sup> Although social and economic reasons for migration have always existed, many people are being involuntarily displaced due to climate change both within and across borders.<sup>82</sup> UNHCR indicates the likelihood of being displaced due to climate change and natural disaster has more than doubled since 1970, with an estimated 203.4 million people displaced between 2008 and 2015.<sup>83</sup> UNHCR recognizes that limited resources and environmental changes are forcing people from their homes and spurring such displacement.<sup>84</sup> Thus marking climate change as a serious peril, threat multiplier, and a driver for refugee crises, armed conflict, and resources depletion.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, the risk for being uprooted from everyday life more than once, also known as secondary displacement has increased.<sup>86</sup>

While refugees are defined as those forced to flee their country due to persecution, war, or violence, there is no international recognition for those displaced and fleeing across borders due to climate change.<sup>87</sup> Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), individuals displaced within their own state, receive significant assistance from UNHCR and are considered to be the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society.<sup>88</sup> The two face significant risk when it comes to climate change and subsequent natural disaster.<sup>89</sup> However, IDPs are less protected by international law, and do not always receive international assistance from UNHCR as Member States retain sovereignty over those within their own

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<sup>77</sup> UNHCR, *Statement by Mr. António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Security Council Briefing “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: “New Challenges to International Peace and Security and Conflict Prevention”*, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Aggravating Factors: Climate Change*, 2019; Njorge, *Africa’s Humanitarian Action in Migration Policy: Adjusting to Environment and Climate Change*; UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

<sup>79</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2017; UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

<sup>80</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Aggravating Factors: Climate Change*, 2019; Njorge, *Africa’s Humanitarian Action in Migration Policy: Adjusting to Environment and Climate Change*.

<sup>81</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>82</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Viewpoint: ‘Refugee’ or ‘Migrant’ – Which is Right?*, 2016; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017.

<sup>83</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>85</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Compact on Refugees, Thematic Discussion 4 (Solutions)*, 2017, p. 1; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*, 2020.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

borders.<sup>90</sup> Despite this, IDPs are capable of receiving assistance from private donors and additional international entities such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United States Agency for International Development.<sup>91</sup> Those considered to be refugees or IDPs due to violence or persecution often reside in areas highly susceptible to the effects of climate change and global warming, also known as climate change hot zones, and may fall victim to secondary displacement due to climate change.<sup>92</sup>

With the international community actively addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has found the protection of refugees increasingly difficult.<sup>93</sup> Over 80% of refugees reside in low to middle-income Member States, face daily challenges and vulnerabilities unique to their locations and climate, and often grapple with vulnerabilities many do not typically see, such as limited access to healthcare, food, water, and sanitation.<sup>94</sup> In response to the COVID-19 pandemic UNHCR has provided aid to refugees and IDPs in over 65 Member States through the distribution of masks, gowns, personal protective equipment (PPE), and medical supplies.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, UNHCR has pledged over USD 50 million toward COVID-19 assistance, but has identified a remarkable need for financial assistance in areas with notable refugee populations.<sup>96</sup> UNHCR has a pivotal role to play in establishing international protection for these groups and is furthermore aiming to provide protection and assistance for those displaced by climate change while actively addressing the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>97</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948) serves as the first internationally recognized framework protecting human rights at the international level, emphasizing that these rights are to be universally recognized and observed by people within Member States and the territories they control.<sup>98</sup> The *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951), also referred to as the “Refugee Convention”, serves as the main instrument of refugee law building on article 14 of the UDHR.<sup>99</sup> The convention details the characteristics of a refugee as well as the legal protection and rights they should receive from states who choose to sign onto the convention.<sup>100</sup> When introduced, the convention was limited to the protection of European refugees after World War II.<sup>101</sup> However, the *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1967) expanded the limitations of the previous convention to include refugees displaced by conditions emerging after 1951.<sup>102</sup>

Resolution 70/1 on “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, serves as landmark document and as the international community’s effort to steer towards a sustainable future.<sup>103</sup> The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* highlights an array of international topics, including goals that assure refugees’, IDPs’, and migrants’ needs are

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *Internally displaced persons IDP: On World Humanitarian Day UNAIDS celebrates the work of #RealLifeHeroes*, 2019 ;United States Agency for International Development, *USAID Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons Policy*, 2004.

<sup>92</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017; Union of Concerned Scientists, *Climate Hot Spots*, 2011.

<sup>93</sup> UNHCR, *Coronavirus outbreak*.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*; UNHCR, *Coronavirus outbreak*.

<sup>98</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> UNHCR, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

<sup>101</sup> UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*, 2020.

<sup>102</sup> UNHCR, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967; UNHCR, *What is a Refugee?*.

<sup>103</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

recognized through policy cohesion at the national level with that of international law.<sup>104</sup> The agenda also addresses climate protection and mitigating the effects of climate change on sustainable development efforts.<sup>105</sup> In 2015, parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) produced the *Paris Agreement*, encouraging all Member States to unite in the common cause to address climate change through mitigation, transparency, action, and support of frameworks and legislation designed to minimize human impact on the world's climates.<sup>106</sup> The agreement serves as a landmark attempt by the international community to combat climate change, and acknowledges the right to preventative assistance and support for those facing significant climate risk.<sup>107</sup> While the *Paris Agreement* mentions rights of migrants in its preamble, the agreement does not explicitly discuss the legal status of refugees and their protections with respect to climate change, but does call for a task force to develop recommendations to address forced displacement due to the effects of climate change.<sup>108</sup>

The *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (New York Declaration) was adopted by the UN General Assembly as resolution 71/1, highlighting commitments to migrants and refugees on a large scale.<sup>109</sup> In 2018, the Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration convened pursuant to the New York Declaration under the auspices of the UN.<sup>110</sup> The conference produced the *UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration*, addressing all dimensions of migration at the international level including forced migration due to climate change and disaster.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the UN General Assembly adopted the Global Compact for Migration as resolution 73/195, outlining key objectives for safe, regular, and orderly migration, including a reduction to adverse factors leading to forced migration, such as climate change and natural disasters.<sup>112</sup>

The *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (OAU Convention) (1969) serves as a regional effort to advance protections of the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>113</sup> The convention, adopted in Addis Ababa by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and ratified by 45 of 54 Member States of the African Union, expanded the definition of a refugee and includes those “fleeing environmental catastrophes.”<sup>114</sup> The *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* (Cartagena Declaration) (1984) was heavily influenced by the OAU Convention, and was adopted by 10 Latin American states as a result of the Colloquium on International Protection of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central America, Mexico, and Panama.<sup>115</sup> The Cartagena Declaration also expanded on the refugee definition, with UNHCR highlighting the protection of refugees due to natural disasters.<sup>116</sup> The *Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action* (2014) was adopted by acclamation by a coalition of Latin American states in 2014, and urged the extension and application of regional refugee definitions at the state level, while mirroring regional initiatives previously mentioned in the Cartagena Declaration.<sup>117</sup> The *Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action* also aims to address international and regional efforts for those internally displaced.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> UNHCR, *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

<sup>105</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>106</sup> COP 21, *Paris Agreement*, 2015; UNFCCC, *What is the Paris Agreement?*,

<sup>107</sup> Lambert, *The Paris Agreement: Spotlight on Climate Migrants*, 2015; UNFCCC, *What is the Paris Agreement?*,

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>110</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Okello, *The 1969 OAU Convention and the Continuing Challenge for the African Union*, 2014.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*; UNHCR, *Summary Conclusions on the Interpretation of the Extended Refugee Definition in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration*, 2014.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> UNHCR, *The Brazil Declaration*.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Role of the International System**

UNHCR has engaged in climate-related displacement initiatives since the mid-1990s, with concrete policy and operational responses in the early 2000s.<sup>119</sup> Their work focuses primarily on legal guidance, development, promotion of policy coherence, research to fill knowledge gaps, and field-based operations to address internal and cross-border displacement, environmental impact, and overall risk reduction activities, including those intended to reduce or avert displacement overall.<sup>120</sup> Since 2015, UNHCR has remained active in climate change displacement alleviation efforts, partnering with additional UN entities such as UNFCCC, intergovernmental organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and others including the Global Protection Cluster and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD).<sup>121</sup> In 2015, UNHCR hosted a regional workshop focusing on domestic implementation of the *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa*, also known as the Kampala Convention (2009).<sup>122</sup> The convention recognizes persons internally displaced by armed conflict, but most notably, by climate change and disaster, with article 5 formally establishing state responsibilities, protection, and assistance of such individuals displaced by climate change and disaster.<sup>123</sup> UNHCR has supported the PDD since 2016, reinforcing the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, a joint consultation approach by states and multinational stakeholders in an effort to synthesize international cooperation, treatment standards of those displaced, and operational mechanisms.<sup>124</sup> In 2017, UNHCR made efforts to effectively provide international protection and humanitarian assistance with their action on forced migration due to climate change and disaster through its *2017-2021 Strategic Directions*.<sup>125</sup> This plan of action contains five core directions: “Protect, Respond, Include, Empower, and Solve.”<sup>126</sup> The strategic directions serve as UNHCR’s way of charting the issues surrounding displacement with relation to major global issues impacting the international community over the next five years.<sup>127</sup>

In 2018, UNHCR collaborated with the Task Force on Displacement (TFD) to develop the *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change* framework.<sup>128</sup> The purpose of the mapping tool and collaboration is to avert forced migration due to climate change, and it includes an array of tools and guidance to reduce the frequency of displacement, exposure to the hazards responsible for such displacement, and to improve future resilience amongst populations.<sup>129</sup> The compiled tools include: regional translation of available climate data and research, frameworks and guidelines to strengthen land use and productivity, regional and national policy to strengthen economic and environmental development, as well as management of natural resources.<sup>130</sup> UNHCR undertook a study in 2018, *In Harm’s Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, to address policy solutions in the occurrence of nexus dynamics, i.e. displacement due to a combination of conflict and disaster and/or

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<sup>119</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> African Union, *African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Person in Africa (Kampala Convention)*, 2009; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, *The Nansen Conference: Climate Change and Disaster Displacement in the 21st Century*, 2019; The Nansen Initiative, *About Us*.

<sup>125</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR’s Role*, 2017.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.; UNHCR, *UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>127</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR’s Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>128</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>129</sup> UNHCR, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

climate change.<sup>131</sup> The study focuses on action taken in four countries within the Horn of Africa and the Americas, and aims to provide practical solutions and strengthen international response to displacement across borders.<sup>132</sup> In January 2020, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was presented with the case of *Teititota v New Zealand* and a claim of forced displacement due to climate change.<sup>133</sup> Teititota of Kiribati, an island Member State directly feeling the adverse effects of climate change through rising sea levels, claimed his life was at risk if he was forced to return to Kiribati.<sup>134</sup> UNHRC ruled against Teititota, but did indicate governments forcing individuals to return to places where climate change exposes them to a life-threatening risk may be unlawful under articles 6 and 7 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.<sup>135</sup> This ruling by UNHRC explicitly calls for a need for national and international effort to address violation of individuals' rights when discussing climate change.<sup>136</sup>

The Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility (Advisory Group) aims to provide technical support to UNFCCC on all aspects of human mobility, particularly to that of forced migration, displacement, or planned relocation due to climate change.<sup>137</sup> The group consists of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations University for Environment and Human Security, the United Nations Development Programme, and several others who analyze the action taken around displacement and migration due to climate change.<sup>138</sup> Parties to UNFCCC aim to implement effective adaptation strategies against climate change-related displacement, such as those highlighted in the *Paris Agreement*.<sup>139</sup> Such suggestions on behalf of the Advisory Group include the temporary or permanent resettlement of those at risk of climate change displacement, also known as facilitated migration and planned relocation.<sup>140</sup>

### ***Climate Change, Conflict, and Displacement***

#### *Climate Change and Conflict*

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicated in a 1990 report that the most significant effect of climate change could be on human migration.<sup>141</sup> Climate change could lead to a displacement of millions due to an array of factors, such as shoreline erosion, flooding, drought, and food scarcity.<sup>142</sup> Forced migration due to these issues already exists within borders, but has even forced many to cross borders to seek better living conditions, spurring further humanitarian crises.<sup>143</sup> Depletion of resources in areas affected by climate change and disaster often leads to increased tension, armed conflict, and secondary displacement.<sup>144</sup> Violence and armed conflict are more likely to occur in less developed areas experiencing significant climate change, as these areas often have little resources to effectively mitigate such conflict.<sup>145</sup> UNHCR aims to promote policy coherence at multiple levels, including: international humanitarian aid foundations, the UN, and institutional norms of national authorities in Member States.<sup>146</sup> Such coherence aims to address institutional gaps, as well as consolidation and overlap issues, while also ensuring newer policies addressing climate change displacement are mainstreamed and reflect

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<sup>131</sup> Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Climate Change, Conflict, and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> UNHCR, *Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change UNFCCC-Paris COP-21*, 2015.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Brown, *Climate Change and Forced Migration: Observations, Projections, and Implications*, 2007.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>144</sup> Edwards, *Forced Displacement Worldwide at its Highest in Decades*, UNHCR, 2017.

<sup>145</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

UNHCR's 2017-2021 Strategic Directions.<sup>147</sup> However, research to fill gaps and overlap in policy, such as those affecting Refugee Status Determination at a regional and state level, remain a priority.<sup>148</sup>

### *Internal vs. Cross-Border Displacement*

The effects of climate change traditionally lead to internal displacement of many before it becomes an issue of cross-border displacement.<sup>149</sup> Due to the complexity of displacement and predicting the occurrence and severity of climate change and natural disasters, an exact figure of those displaced both internally and cross-border is difficult to determine.<sup>150</sup> Two forms of cross-border displacement exist: involuntary refuge in another country in the instance of climate change or natural disaster, and residence in another country at the time of a disaster, leading to a permission to extend the stay.<sup>151</sup> In cases of severe disaster or climate-related occurrences, such as drought and famine, displacement can cross borders.<sup>152</sup> Once it does, protection and assistance for those displaced becomes increasingly uncertain, as there is no internationally recognized term for those displaced in the context of climate change, and little framework for those displaced in areas less developed.<sup>153</sup> The nature of the displacement may fall within an area known as "Nexus Dynamics", where an issue overlaps or is correlated to another event.<sup>154</sup> For instance, where climate change exacerbates existing displacement due to armed conflict or climate change causing local conflicts and displacement, as in the Horn of Africa, and an increase in natural and weather-related disasters in the Americas.<sup>155</sup> Such dynamics have presented a challenge to reintegration of those displaced, and remain a focal point of further UNHCR facilitation in the support and facilitation of climate-related refugee protection mechanisms.<sup>156</sup> With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, forced migration due to climate change faces a unique obstacle.<sup>157</sup> The rapid spread of the COVID-19 outbreak across countries has forced many to institute travel restrictions and lockdowns.<sup>158</sup> According to IOM, the inability for many to travel between Member States due to the pandemic presents a challenge to the human condition and undermines the ability for those who seek shelter from hazardous environments.<sup>159</sup> While many face a sense of immobilization during the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM indicates those displaced will face continued migration restrictions.<sup>160</sup>

### **Adaptation Strategies to Displacement**

#### *Policy Cohesion: Nexus Dynamics*

Due to the increasing frequency and intensity of climate change related incidents and disaster, scientists anticipate a vast number of people will be displaced from their homes by sudden onsets of disasters, including tropical cyclones, floods, as well as slower onsets in the form of droughts and rising sea levels.<sup>161</sup> Forced migration due to such adverse effects of climate change and disaster often correlates with armed conflict, requiring a unique form of assistance and protection from UNHCR.<sup>162</sup> In 2018, UNHCR's study, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, examined international protection of refugees in

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<sup>147</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> The Nansen Initiative, *About Us*.

<sup>152</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Weerasinghe, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>157</sup> IOM, *COVID-19, Climate Change and Migration: Constructing Crises, Reinforcing Borders*.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*, 2018.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

response to famine in Somalia and Ethiopia, as well as the earthquake response in Haiti by Brazil and Mexico.<sup>163</sup> The study examined the response by these four states, and concluded that existing legal refugee frameworks play a significant role in the response to the protection and needs of those displaced by conflict, but also have the ability to interact with those displaced due to disaster.<sup>164</sup> Through the study, UNHCR recommended further legal interpretative guidance, country-specific guidelines on eligibility, and regional specific strategies to promote the application of the Refugee Convention with respect to nexus dynamics.<sup>165</sup> Despite these findings and recommendations, a significant knowledge gap still exists, and has been a focal point of UNHCR in its 2017-2021 Strategic Directions.<sup>166</sup> Because of this, UNHCR suggests an increased investment in monitoring and evaluation techniques to better learn from those displaced.<sup>167</sup>

#### *Planned Relocation*

After the effects of the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the government of Maldives made a decision to address its susceptibility to rising sea levels and natural disaster through planned relocation methods.<sup>168</sup> By shifting attention to the effects of climate change, Maldives placed an emphasis on resilience and has started initiatives aimed to allow individuals to move from delicate areas to those more durable.<sup>169</sup> Sixteen years later, the effects of climate change and natural disasters, once seen as threats of the future, are here and are actively presenting themselves.<sup>170</sup> While UNHRC ruled against Teititoo of Kiribati in their claim of immediate life-endangering conditions due to climate change, the determination that those fleeing the effects of climate change should not be forced to return to their country of origin serves as a landmark decision for the rights of those facing future risk of displacement.<sup>171</sup> Because climate change and natural disasters present a threat to many more like Teititoo, UNHCR has taken on the task of contributing to the international community's response.<sup>172</sup> The UNHCR study, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, presents the concept of planned relocation, or the process where a group of people are moved from their original homes to a new location and assisted with the tools to rebuild their lives.<sup>173</sup>

In 2013, the *Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States* were established and organized through the non-governmental organization Displacement Solutions.<sup>174</sup> The idea behind the principles is to promote climate change resettlement for those at risk, while also preserving the social and cultural

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.; Weerasinghe, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, 2018.

<sup>165</sup> Platform on Disaster Displacement, *Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*, 2018; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*; Weerasinghe, *In Harm's Way: International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change*, 2018.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>168</sup> Schafer, *Bracing for climate change is a matter of survival for the Maldives*, 2019.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020; UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

<sup>171</sup> UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>172</sup> UNHCR, *Why UNHCR is taking action on climate change displacement*.

<sup>173</sup> UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*, 2015; UNHCR, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, 2018.

<sup>174</sup> Displacement Solutions, *The Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States*, 2013; UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*, 2015; UNHCR, *Mapping of Existing International and Regional Guidance and Tools on Averting, Minimizing, Addressing and Facilitating Durable Solutions to Displacement Related to the Adverse Impacts of Climate Change*, 2018.

institutions of those settling in new areas.<sup>175</sup> The principles also indicate such action should promote comprehensive disaster risk reduction techniques and bolster capacities in order to assist with the process of resettlement.<sup>176</sup> Moving certain populations from such climate related hazards, particularly those affected by rising sea levels, may serve as a viable solution.<sup>177</sup> UNHCR, along with the Brookings Institute and Georgetown University, developed the *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation* in 2015, in an attempt to establish guidelines for Member States that need to undertake planned relocation as a way to address displacement due to climate change.<sup>178</sup> However, determining when to relocate such populations will depend on the nature of such hazards, economic provisions, political implications, and should only be used as a last resort option for Member States.<sup>179</sup> UNHCR recognizes such action as an effective adaptation strategy toward climate change, but still a process, as legal and institutional frameworks for such action must be in place.<sup>180</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Climate change and disasters have forced many to migrate and have displaced millions throughout the world.<sup>181</sup> UNHCR has made forced migration due to climate change and disaster a focal point in their efforts to protect those most vulnerable to such displacement through the 2017-2021 Strategic Directions, UNFCCC Advisory Group partnership, IOM collaboration, reaffirmation of the 2020 UNHRC statement on forced displacement due to climate change, and involvement with several other climate change displacement initiatives.<sup>182</sup> Additionally, regional organizations and coalitions have taken actions since the Refugee Convention in 1951 to expand on the protection of those displaced internally and across borders.<sup>183</sup> However, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique obstacle to refugees as assistance and response operations must adapt to address displacement during a global health emergency.<sup>184</sup> Displacement due to climate change and disasters is expected to continue, with many at risk, particularly in less developed areas and those affected by rising sea levels.<sup>185</sup>

### **Further Research**

Delegates should consider the following questions when conducting their research: What can UNHCR do for the protection of refugees and migrants displaced due to climate change? How will these protections affect national governments and their interests, particularly with the ruling of UNHRC? What practices or strategies have been implemented in areas considered to be climate change hot zones? How does conflict play a role in areas already feeling the effects of climate change and natural disaster? How can UNHCR address forced migration due to climate change with respect to the SDGs? How should UNHCR and the international community go about climate change resilience?

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> UNHCR, *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*, 2015.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.; UNHCR, *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>183</sup> Okello, *The 1969 OAU Convention and the Continuing Challenge for the African Union*, 2014; UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967.

<sup>184</sup> UNHCR, *Coronavirus outbreak*.

<sup>185</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role*, 2017; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Disaster Displacement*.

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*The source provided comes directly from UNHCR's website and contains a brief background into the recent work of the committee in the realm of climate change and disaster displacement. The source summarizes UNHCR's role when addressing climate change and disaster displacement, while also highlighting suggested policy action and framework on the topic. Delegates will find this source significantly useful when conducting research on climate change and its relation to displacement. Furthermore, the website provides links to many other relevant documents on the issue.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015). *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/562f798d9/planned-relocation-guidance-october-2015.html>

*This guidance was compiled and published by UNHCR in 2015 and focuses on forced displacement due to climate change and disaster through planned relocation. The report highlights planned relocation as an adaptation strategy against climate change, and provides legal and policy frameworks, implementation strategies, and oversight mechanisms. The report also provides a set of principles in accordance with the guidance, focusing not only on response to climate change and disaster, but also anticipation of future climate change. Delegates will find this source particularly helpful, as it provides suggested action directly from UNHCR.*

Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *UN Human Rights Committee decision on climate change is a wake-up call, according to UNHCR*. Retrieved 18 July 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2020/1/5e2ab8ae4/un-human-rights-committee-decision-climate-change-wake-up-call-according.html>

*The article provided highlights a case heard by the United Nations Human Rights Council in early 2020. The case ultimately ruled against an individual claiming their life would be at risk if they were forced to return to their home country, because of its susceptibility to climate change. Despite ruling against the individual's claim, UNHRC indicated Member States forcing people to return to countries stricken by significant climate change may be unlawful and in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Delegates will find this document useful as it serves as the United Nations first ruling against the forced return of climate change refugees to their home countries by foreign governments.*

Platform on Disaster Displacement. (2018, October 6). *Climate Change, Conflict and Displacement: Understanding the Nexus*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: <https://disasterdisplacement.org/climate-change-conflict-and-displacement-understanding-the-nexus>

*The Platform on Disaster Displacement works to protect people displaced across borders due to climate change and disaster. The article provides insight into a recent study conducted by UNHCR, International Protection in the Context of Nexus Dynamics Between Conflict or Violence and Disaster or Climate Change. The study aims to explain the correlation of nexus dynamics, particularly those of climate change displacement and armed conflict. The source will be useful to delegates as they consider the impact climate change has on not just displacement, but war and conflict.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2018). *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Part II: Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12 (Part II))*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: [https://undocs.org/A/73/12\(Part%20II\)](https://undocs.org/A/73/12(Part%20II))

*The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees aims to reflect on past actions, while also highlighting the challenges going forward when addressing refugees.*

UNHCR indicates several root-causes with climate change, disasters, and environmental degradation receiving attention. The New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees receives significant reference, as the report aims to highlight areas of concern moving forward. Delegates will find the source useful when researching suggested courses of action.

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-third session. (2019). *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (A/RES/73/195)*. Retrieved 25 September 2020 from: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/195>

*The Intergovernmental Conference convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, and pursuant to the New York Declaration (2016). The Global Compact on Migration was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2018, and attempts to address all dimensions of international migration, including forced migration due to climate change and disaster. The source provided contains definitions, shared responsibilities, and purposes. Delegates will find this source useful, as it displays action taken by the international community immediately after the New York Declaration.*

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## II. Ensuring Access to Safe and Sustainable Energy

### **Introduction**

As of 2020, there are over 79.5 million refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and asylum seekers in the world.<sup>186</sup> Of those, 26 million are refugees, who by definition are forced to live in countries outside of their own, either within cities or in refugee camps.<sup>187</sup> More than half of the refugees under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) live in urban settings, which has been an increasing trend in recent years.<sup>188</sup> 85% of the world's refugees currently reside in developing countries, often without adequate infrastructure to provide reliable energy access to refugee populations.<sup>189</sup> UNHCR aims to ensure that refugees have access to safe and sustainable energy sources for heating, lighting, cooking, and power.<sup>190</sup> In this context, UNHCR considers energy to be sustainable if its production does not restrict future generations' ability to meet their energy needs.<sup>191</sup> In this respect, renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, and biofuels, must be distinguished from traditional energy sources, such as firewood.<sup>192</sup> Reliance on traditional fuel sources can be dangerous for refugees and damaging to the environment.<sup>193</sup>

Although access to sustainable energy sources has improved over the past decade, more needs to be done to ensure universal access to sustainable energy.<sup>194</sup> Refugee settlements, often separated from the infrastructure of host communities, are at risk of being excluded from safe and sustainable energy strategies and frameworks.<sup>195</sup> Thus, refugees living in camps are among the most disadvantaged in accessing sustainable energy, with over 90% lacking adequate access.<sup>196</sup> To ensure access to more sustainable and renewable forms of energy for all, the differences between urban and rural settings and the individual needs of each refugee settlement must be taken into account.<sup>197</sup>

### **International and Regional Framework**

The international community has developed numerous frameworks relating to the protection of refugees and displaced persons, beginning with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), which established the right of a person to leave their home country or seek asylum elsewhere.<sup>198</sup> The 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* provided a working definition for the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker', while outlining the basic rights refugees should be afforded by all states.<sup>199</sup> As refugee populations changed during the 1960s, the *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1967) was adopted, expanding the definition of the term refugee to cover those who were displaced after 1951 and those outside of Europe.<sup>200</sup> In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 71/1, *The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, outlining the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (2016) and laying the foundation for the Global Compact on Refugees (2018).<sup>201</sup> The two most recent

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<sup>186</sup> UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*, 2019, p. 57.

<sup>189</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, 2020, p.2.

<sup>190</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>191</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2024*, 2019, p. 5.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>193</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>194</sup> IEA, et al., *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2020*, 2020, p. 1.

<sup>195</sup> Bellanca, *Sustainable Energy Provision Among Displaced Populations: Policy and Practice*, 2014.

<sup>196</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Launches Sustainable Energy Strategy, Strengthens Climate Action*, 2019.

<sup>197</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*, 2019, p. 57.

<sup>198</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>199</sup> UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

<sup>200</sup> UNHCR, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967.

<sup>201</sup> UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*, 2016.

frameworks aim to enhance responsibility sharing and encourage innovative solutions to address the rising number of refugees across the globe.<sup>202</sup>

The development of frameworks relating to sustainable energy began at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.<sup>203</sup> The conference produced significant outcome documents and treaties, including the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* (1992) and the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) (1992).<sup>204</sup> Both the *Rio Declaration* and UNFCCC aim to reduce the effects of climate change through targeted reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>205</sup> Member States party to the UNFCCC meet annually to monitor progress and to develop updated protocols, such as the *Kyoto Protocol* (1995) and the *Paris Agreement* (2015).<sup>206</sup> UNFCCC and its subsequent protocols have contributed to a global shift towards the adoption of sustainable energy practices and policies, and the commitments of its signatories directly impact the way in which refugees access energy.<sup>207</sup> The most impactful framework relating to safe and sustainable energy for all is UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015), which contains the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>208</sup> The SDGs are comprised of 17 interconnected goals to be achieved by the year 2030, all of which address improving sustainable development while avoiding any further damage to the environment.<sup>209</sup> SDG 7 aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable forms of energy for all, a goal which is of particular importance to vulnerable refugee populations.<sup>210</sup> Moreover, ensuring access to safe and sustainable energy is critical to accomplish other SDGs, as almost 75% of all SDG targets are interlinked with access to energy.<sup>211</sup> Since the SDGs are being implemented across all UN operations, UNHCR must look to include the goals of SDG 7 and all related targets within its initiatives to ensure that refugee populations have access to sustainable energy.<sup>212</sup> In this respect, the *Global Plan of Action (GPA) for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement* (2018) serves as a framework for coordinated action to achieve SDG 7.<sup>213</sup> The GPA consists of several international organizations, private-sector entities, governments, and other stakeholders, and promotes transition to sustainable energy through cross-sector cooperation.<sup>214</sup> Its key principles are the development of context-specific solutions, the prioritization of people and community centered approaches, and the integration of gender perspectives.<sup>215</sup>

In 2014, UNHCR initiated its *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, a plan of action for addressing the energy needs of refugee resettlement communities.<sup>216</sup> The SAFE initiative features the inclusion of energy access in emergency response plans, the adaptation of relief efforts to the household level, and the implementation of country level plans.<sup>217</sup> Building on the SAFE strategy, UNHCR launched a new *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy 2019-2024* in October 2019.<sup>218</sup> Focusing on the areas of ensuring access to safe and sustainable energy for cooking and electrification on household and community levels, the strategy seeks to cover refugees'

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<sup>202</sup> UN General Assembly, *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/73/12 (Part I))*, 2018.

<sup>203</sup> UN CED, *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, 1992.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.; UN CED, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 1992.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Rosenberg-Jansen, *Refugee Energy*, 2018.

<sup>208</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.; UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>211</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2024*, p. 7.

<sup>212</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>213</sup> UNITAR, *Global Plan of Action (GPA) for Sustainable Energy Solutions in Situations of Displacement*, 2020.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2024*, 2019.

energy needs in a sustainable manner and to reduce the impact of refugee camps on climate change.<sup>219</sup> While maintaining the key objectives of the SAFE initiative, the *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy 2019-2024* further defines concrete initiatives, milestones, and indicators, thereby facilitating tangible measures towards its implementation.<sup>220</sup>

At the regional level, agencies and organizations have adopted similar frameworks to their international counterparts.<sup>221</sup> The African Union (AU) has implemented its *Agenda 2063*, a strategic plan that comprises a number of different environmental, social, and developmental goals.<sup>222</sup> This strategy is being carried out by individual Member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI), and the AU itself.<sup>223</sup> While the partnership between the AU and AREI aims to address the need for sustainable energy in Africa, neither *Agenda 2063* nor AREI's *Plan of Action* contain strategies pertaining to the specific energy needs of refugees.<sup>224</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

Various actors within and outside the UN system are engaged in addressing the energy needs of refugees in accordance with the SDGs.<sup>225</sup> The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) has partnered with the Technical University of Denmark to provide research on refugee fuel needs, including case studies on refugee settlements to assess the viability of alternative household fuels.<sup>226</sup> Building on their findings, UN Environment and the Technical University of Denmark advise UNHCR on context-specific approaches for more sustainable energy solutions in refugee settlements.<sup>227</sup> The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) conducts research on the transition to renewable energy sources and, in collaboration with a number of international agencies, has published the *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report 2020*, highlighting that despite progress towards SDG 7, efforts need to be intensified in order to reach the goal by 2030.<sup>228</sup> IRENA has worked with UNHCR, including on the development of the *2019-2024 Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy*.<sup>229</sup> Based on its research, IRENA shares recommendations with international organizations on ways to improve data gathering, processing and evaluation, thus promoting access to safe and sustainable energy in situations of displacement.<sup>230</sup> In addition to actors within the UN system, various NGOs and private sector entities have approached the topic of sustainable energy for refugees.<sup>231</sup> Sustainable Energy for All is four years into its *Strategic Framework for Results: 2016-2021*, a plan of action through which the NGO seeks to address the energy needs of developing nations by engaging leadership, collecting and analyzing data, and creating partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including UN and private sector actors.<sup>232</sup> This strategy is not aimed at refugee communities specifically, but outlines strategies that would be effective in assisting refugee populations.<sup>233</sup> Another NGO that works to assist refugees is Practical Action, which has

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-30.

<sup>221</sup> Abebe, *AU Summit 32: Renewed Focus on Refugees*, 2019.

<sup>222</sup> *Africa Renewable Energy Initiative*, 2019.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Rosenberg-Jansen, *Refugee Energy*, 2018, pp. 2-4.

<sup>226</sup> UNEP & Technical University of Denmark Partnership, *Sustainable Energy Use in Refugee Camps*, 2009.

<sup>227</sup> UNEP & Technical University of Denmark Partnership, *Sustainable Energy for Refugees: UNEP DTU Partnership Part of Global Plan*, 2018.

<sup>228</sup> IEA, et al., *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report*, 2020.

<sup>229</sup> IRENA & UNHCR, *Renewables for Refugee Settlements: Sustainable Energy Access in Humanitarian Situations*, 2019, pp. 2-4.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>231</sup> Pielli & Kapadia, *Serving Refugee Communities with Tech, Energy Access, Entrepreneurship: Mastercard and USAID's Collective Approach*, 2019.

<sup>232</sup> Sustainable Energy for All, *Strategic Framework for Results 2016-21*, 2016.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

partnered with UNHCR and the IKEA Foundation to establish the Renewable Energy for Refugees project, building renewable energy sources at refugee resettlement camps in Jordan and Rwanda.<sup>234</sup>

The role of UNHCR in ensuring access to safe and sustainable energy has increased following the adoption of the SDGs.<sup>235</sup> UNHCR has embraced the system-wide attention to sustainability in recent years, especially within its *2014-2018 Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE)*, and its subsequent *2019-2024 Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy*.<sup>236</sup> Within its *Strategic Directions: 2017-2021*, UNHCR has included energy needs in its current operational plan, specifically through its focus on engaging third-party solutions and empowering refugees to find their own solutions.<sup>237</sup> At the first Global Refugee Forum, which took place in December 2019, UNHCR launched the Clean Energy Challenge.<sup>238</sup> Based on the *2019-2024 Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy*, the challenge seeks to provide safe and sustainable energy in refugee camps until 2030 by ensuring individuals' access to electricity, modern cooking fuel, and water supply, while at the same time building capacity for health, education, and other facilities.<sup>239</sup>

### ***Sustainable Energy for Refugees at Scale***

While many of the initiatives to achieve SDG 7 focus on shifting large scale energy production towards more sustainable methods, improving sustainability within refugee settlements often concerns small scale energy consumption at the household level.<sup>240</sup> UNHCR describes refugee energy needs as being focused on cooking, heating, lighting, and power needs.<sup>241</sup> Many refugees rely on fuel sources such as firewood, which presents a number of hazards in both use and collection of materials.<sup>242</sup> Firewood can be a dangerous material capable of starting structure fires, as well as creating toxic fumes which harm air quality and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>243</sup>

When viewed through a gender perspective, the collection of firewood constitutes a potentially dangerous activity for women, who are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence when travelling to collect fuel.<sup>244</sup> These dangers have long been recognized, with NGOs such as the Women's Refugee Commission having brought it to the attention of the global community over a decade ago.<sup>245</sup> Yet, interventions that would phase out the use of wood fuel have not been widely implemented.<sup>246</sup> Bearing all of this in mind, energy sustainability for many refugees means transitioning away from firewood as a source of fuel and adopting renewable energy sources.<sup>247</sup> However, current UNHCR interventions, which include solar lanterns for lighting and gas stoves for cooking can be expensive and not accessible to refugees.<sup>248</sup>

On the other end of the refugee energy spectrum, larger-scale energy sources play a vital role in ensuring the operation of civic and social infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, within larger refugee

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<sup>234</sup> Practical Action, *Renewable Energy for Refugees*, 2020.

<sup>235</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>236</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014; UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2024*, 2019.

<sup>237</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>238</sup> International Institute for Sustainable Development, *First Global Refugee Forum Registers Pledges to Improve Refugee Protection*, 2020; United Nations, *Policy Briefs in Support of the High-Level Political Forum 2020: Accelerating SDG7 Achievement in the Time of COVID-19*, 2020, p. 148.

<sup>239</sup> UNHCR, *Clean Energy Challenge*.

<sup>240</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2024*, 2020.

<sup>241</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Melzer, Bottled Gas Scheme Eases Fuel Crisis for Rohingya Refugees, *UNHCR*, 2018.

<sup>244</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>245</sup> Gerrard, Influx of Refugees and Limited Firewood Leads to Spike in Gender-Based Violence, *Women's Refugee Commission*, 2016.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

settlements, specifically in urban settings.<sup>249</sup> Access to education and healthcare are human rights which are easily endangered within refugee settlements, and a lack of sufficient power to adequately operate these buildings is a common issue.<sup>250</sup> The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic underlines the need for reliable energy sources for healthcare facilities as the adequate treatment of patients requires electricity.<sup>251</sup> As lockdown measures in response to COVID-19 have led to school closures in refugee settlements, reliable access to electricity at home is crucial to facilitate remote learning for all.<sup>252</sup> However, oil prices have decreased against the backdrop of the pandemic, threatening the mainstreaming of safe and sustainable energy sources to be deprioritized.<sup>253</sup> Energy investments that are required to put in place necessary infrastructure are likely to decline by 20% compared to 2019 due to COVID-19.<sup>254</sup> This will result in an increasing need for private sector engagement and public private partnerships (PPPs) to provide technical expertise as well as financing.<sup>255</sup> While developed states and NGOs may be able to provide technical expertise and assistance with renewable energy technology, it will be of little use to refugees who live in rural encampments with no electrical infrastructure.<sup>256</sup> Similarly, concentrating on the coordination of aid which can provide gas powered stoves and solar lighting for refugee households will not address the needs of urban settlements which require access to sustainable power.<sup>257</sup>

### **Case Study: Azraq Refugee Camp, Jordan**

Following the outbreak of civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic, 6.6 million refugees have fled the country, mainly to neighboring states.<sup>258</sup> The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosts around 1.3 million Syrian refugees mostly in urban settings but also two large camps, one of which is Azraq camp housing over 36,000 individuals.<sup>259</sup> Situated in the Jordanian desert, the Azraq camp features unique energy needs for its inhabitants, who have relied on solar lamps and had no form of cooling for the first three years of the camp's existence.<sup>260</sup> UNHCR, in conjunction with the IKEA Foundation, built a USD 9.6 million solar power facility at the camp in 2017.<sup>261</sup> The solar power facility is connected to Jordan's national power grid, meaning that Azraq is able to transfer any unused energy to its host community, which represents a sustainable use of resources.<sup>262</sup>

For Azraq, the addition of solar power has led to an improvement in quality of life for its inhabitants.<sup>263</sup> The positive outcomes within the households are numerous: residents have access to light after dark, they can invest in cold storage options to preserve food and prevent waste, they can cool their homes via electric fans, and they can utilize washing machines in order to save time for other activities.<sup>264</sup> There are other benefits as well, including the provision of training in technical skills and work for many of the camp's inhabitants.<sup>265</sup> Providing refugees within the camp the opportunity to learn how to construct, operate, and maintain their solar power infrastructure plays a vital role in ensuring that the community is

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<sup>249</sup> Lehne et al., *Energy Services for Refugees and Displaced People*, 2016.

<sup>250</sup> Hashem, Jordan's Za'atari Camp Goes Green with New Solar Plant, *UNHCR*, 2017.

<sup>251</sup> SEforALL, *2019 Annual Report: Preparing for a Decade of Action*, 2020, p.18.

<sup>252</sup> Dunmore & Cherri, Syrian Refugees Adapt to Life under Coronavirus Lockdown in Jordan Camps, *UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>253</sup> Turk & Kamiya, The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Clean Energy Progress, *IEA*, 2020.

<sup>254</sup> IEA, *World Energy Investments 2020, Key Findings*, 2020.

<sup>255</sup> Khanna, *Universal Energy Access Just got Harder*, 2020; IEA, et al., *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report*, 2020, p. 146.

<sup>256</sup> Bellanca, *Sustainable Energy Provision Among Displaced Populations: Policy and Practice*, 2014.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020.

<sup>259</sup> WFP, *10 Facts About the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan*, 2020; UNHCR, *Azraq Camp Fact Sheet (July 2020)*, 2020.

<sup>260</sup> Dunmore, Jordan's Azraq Becomes World's First Clean Energy Refugee Camp, *UNHCR*, 2017.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

resilient and capable of creating solutions within settlements.<sup>266</sup> Lastly, the solar power generated in Azraq allows for the operation of schools for the more than 10,000 children that are enrolled in formal schooling in the camp.<sup>267</sup> In Azraq, COVID-19 related lockdown measures have led to increasing energy demands at the household level with residents only leaving their homes if necessary.<sup>268</sup> In response to school closures in the camp, UNHCR provides more energy for households to support distance learning.<sup>269</sup> While the solar power facility is suited to meet the general and COVID-19 related energy needs of the Azraq camp, this solution is not applicable in all refugee settlements, as solar power is not effective in all climates and not all refugee settlements have sufficient electric infrastructure to make use of this technology.<sup>270</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Addressing the individual needs of every refugee settlement is a complex task in light of the 26 million refugees in the world today.<sup>271</sup> There is no single solution or approach when considering the energy needs of refugees.<sup>272</sup> To carry out the mandate of UNHCR and adhere to the system-wide aims of the SDGs, it is imperative that the international community works together to find innovative and inclusive solutions.<sup>273</sup> This requires the involvement of regional actors, especially given the fact that most refugees are housed within neighboring states.<sup>274</sup> As refugee crises in Syria, Myanmar, South Sudan, and Venezuela continue to forcibly displace citizens, the international community must find a way to ensure that the communities and settlements which host these refugees are equipped with sustainable energy sources capable of meeting their needs.<sup>275</sup> The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the necessity to improve access to safe and sustainable energy in refugee settlements, while at the same time creating additional challenges in this regard, such as decreasing investments in sustainable energy infrastructure.<sup>276</sup>

### **Further Research**

When moving forward with their research, delegates should ask themselves the following questions: How can UNHCR facilitate greater (regional) cooperation towards achieving SDG 7? Considering the diverse nature of refugee settlements, what types of partnerships can effectively address the different needs? How can successes such as the Azraq Refugee Camp be translated to other locations? What can UNHCR do to overcome key challenges to current energy interventions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic?

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<sup>266</sup> Hujale, The Best Way to Achieve Sustainable Energy for Refugees Is to Make Them Partners and Not Just Recipients, *UNHCR Innovation Service*, 2015.

<sup>267</sup> UNHCR, *Azraq Camp Fact Sheet (July 2020)*, 2020.

<sup>268</sup> Dunmore & Cherri, Syrian Refugees Adapt to Life under Coronavirus Lockdown in Jordan Camps, *UNHCR*, 2020.

<sup>269</sup> UNHCR, *Azraq Camp Fact Sheet (July 2020)*, 2020.

<sup>270</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 24.

<sup>271</sup> IRENA, *Harnessing the Power of Renewables in Refugee Camps*, 2018.

<sup>272</sup> Bellanca, *Sustainable Energy Provision Among Displaced Populations: Policy and Practice*, 2014.

<sup>273</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>274</sup> UNHCR, *Figures at a Glance*, 2020.

<sup>275</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>276</sup> IEA, *World Energy Investments 2020, Key Findings*, 2020; SEforALL, *2019 Annual Report: Preparing for a Decade of Action*, 2020, p.18.

*This UNHCR news article was released following the completion of the solar power plant at the Azraq refugee settlement in 2017. While the article does contain some statistics on the settlement's energy needs, its main focus is the impact that the introduction of solar energy has had on the camp. The article also discusses the vital role of public and private sector partnerships in achieving renewable energy for Azraq's residents, which may prove useful as delegates seek to find similar solutions for refugees around the world. This article can provide a quick overview of the impact of renewable energy at Azraq, which is featured as a case study within this background guide.*

International Energy Agency, et al. (2020). *Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report*. Retrieved 19 August 2020 from: [https://trackingsdg7.esmap.org/data/files/download-documents/tracking\\_sdg\\_7\\_2020-full\\_report\\_-\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://trackingsdg7.esmap.org/data/files/download-documents/tracking_sdg_7_2020-full_report_-_web_0.pdf)

*The annually published Tracking SDG 7: The Energy Progress Report monitors progress in implementing SDG 7. The 2020 Report covers the time before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting that despite advances towards SDG 7, efforts need to be increased in order to reach the goal by 2030. When thinking about approaches to strengthen access to safe and sustainable energy, delegates may refer to best practices, policies, and measures to implement SDG 7 as outlined in this report.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE): A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*. Retrieved 23 August 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/530f11ee6/global-strategy-safe-access-fuel-energy-safe.html>

*This four-year strategy was a comprehensive UNHCR plan for enhancing access to safe and sustainable energy within refugee settlements. It highlights the dangers of currently used sources of fuel, possible alternatives, and future goals. The initiative included areas concentrating on energy access in emergency response plans, implementation methods, and adaptation strategies for relief at the household level. Delegates can use this resource as a tool to better understand the scope of energy issues within refugee centers, especially the differences between the needs of smaller/rural centers and larger/urban ones.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2017). *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*. Retrieved 21 August 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/excom/announce/5894558d4/unhcrs-strategic-directions-2017-2021.html>

*This document serves to highlight the current direction of UNHCR operations worldwide, providing a five-pronged approach to addressing the issues facing refugees. While the strategy is not geared specifically towards efforts to ensure access to sustainable and safe energy sources, it outlines the agency's larger goals and strategies. When thinking about how to approach solutions for this topic, delegates may refer to this as a guide to understanding the ways in which UNHCR is currently seeking to solve problems for the refugees of the world.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2024*. Retrieved 19 August 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/partners/projects/5db16a4a4/global-strategy-for-sustainable-energy.html>

*Building on the UNHCR Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) 2014-2018, this strategy is the most recent large-scale UNHCR plan for implementing sustainable energy within refugee settlements. The strategy focuses on improvements of refugees' livelihoods through ensuring access to safe and sustainable energy while at the same time striving towards environmentally friendly energy in order to minimize environmental stress caused by traditional energy sources in refugee settlements. This document allows delegates to get an overview of guiding principles, country-specific challenges, and strategic approaches to improve access to safe and sustainable energy for all.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020, August 10). *Azraq Camp Fact Sheet (July 2020)*. Retrieved 19 August 2020 from: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/78179>

*This brief document provides a succinct collection of data relating to the Azraq refugee camp in Jordan, which became the first refugee settlement to incorporate a solar power plant in 2017. The Azraq camp fact sheet includes relevant information such as demographic data, a list of UN and international agencies currently operating within the camp, and updates on the status of health and education for the refugees who live there, including impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. As the Azraq settlement is the focus of the case study, this fact sheet can aid delegates in assessing how and why Azraq has been successful in implementing solar energy for its residents, as well as how similar successes can be achieved elsewhere.*

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2020). *Policy Briefs in Support of the High-Level Political Forum 2020. Accelerating SDG7 Achievement in the Time of COVID-19*. Retrieved 19 August 2020 from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26235UNFINALFINAL.pdf>

*This compilation of policy briefs, compiled by UN DESA with many UN and international organizations contributing, served as preparation for the 2020 High-Level Political Forum, which took place in July 2020 under the topic of “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.” The policy briefs include insights on progress towards the implementation of SDG 7, as well as challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegates can use this source to receive in-depth information on recent improvements concerning each target of SDG 7, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

United Nations, General Assembly, Seventy-first session. (2016). *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1)*. Retrieved 23 August 2020 from: <http://undocs.org/A/RES/71/1>

*The New York Declaration is one of the most recent UN General Assembly resolutions pertaining to refugee issues. The declaration includes the structures of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which stands as one of the two current international frameworks for bolstering the capacities of host nations to address large-scale refugee crises. This framework can serve as a starting point for delegates in their research relating to sustainable energy capacity within host nations.*

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### III. Improving Employment Opportunities for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

#### *Introduction*

In 1946, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted resolution 62 (I) on “Refugees and Displaced Persons,” marking the beginning of the UN’s commitment towards improving employment opportunities for refugees and displaced persons.<sup>277</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is at the forefront of UN-led efforts, initiatives, and programs related to supporting refugees and displaced populations.<sup>278</sup> Article 1 of the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* defines refugees as those who are “unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”<sup>279</sup> In addition to refugees, UNHCR expanded its efforts in 2003 to include internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>280</sup> While there is no official definition of an IDP, the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* set by UNHCR presents IDPs as persons who are forced to flee their homes as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, and habitual violations of human rights, as well as natural or man-made disasters; yet IDPs are displaced within their state’s borders and thus do not cross international borders.<sup>281</sup> According to UNHCR’s Global Trends Report 2020, more than 79 million people were displaced at the end of 2019, almost twice the number of a decade ago.<sup>282</sup> Moreover, the report recognizes that refugees and IDPs have a lower employment rate than other people, making them one of the most vulnerable groups in the labor market.<sup>283</sup>

To aid these communities, UNHCR cooperates with Member States to explore and promote sustainable solutions for refugees and IDPs, including voluntary repatriation, local integration, and third country resettlement.<sup>284</sup> UNHCR’s *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern* describes sustainable solutions as those that establish “stable living conditions for refugees that end the cycle of displacement.”<sup>285</sup> Despite the efforts of UNHCR, refugees and IDPs continue to face multiple obstacles for employment, such as lack of programs that assess refugees’ skills, as well as legal and political barriers.<sup>286</sup> As a result of these various obstacles, refugees and IDPs experience higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, and unsafe/unstable employment.<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated insecure employment, which places additional obstacles on refugees.<sup>288</sup> These additional barriers brought about by the spread of COVID-19 may in turn cause unemployment, poverty, and loss of livelihoods for refugees and IDPs.<sup>289</sup> UNHCR defines livelihoods as activities carried out to generate an income that will cover people’s basic needs, like food, shelter, and clothing.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> UN General Assembly, *Refugees and Displaced Persons: Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, and Agreement on Interim Measures to be Taken in Respect of Refugees and Displaced Person A/RES/62(I)*, 1946, p. 99.

<sup>278</sup> UNHCR, *Protecting Refugees & the Role of UNHCR*, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>279</sup> UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

<sup>280</sup> UNHCR, *Internally Displaced People*, 2020; UNHCR, *Voluntary Repatriation: International Protection Handbook*, 2018.

<sup>281</sup> UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2018-2019*, 2018, p. 202.

<sup>282</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, 2019, p. 8.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>284</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2018-2019 - Building Better Futures*, 2017.

<sup>285</sup> UNHCR, *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Persons of Concern*, 2003, pp. 5-6.

<sup>286</sup> UNCTAD, *Policy Guide on Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees*, 2018, p. 28.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>288</sup> Dempster et al., *Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees’ Economic Inclusion*, 2020.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>290</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 7.

UNHCR and the World Bank recognize that economic inclusion of refugees and IDPs plays a key role in providing sustainable solutions while promoting self-reliance and resilience among displaced populations.<sup>291</sup> As such, UNHCR encourages Member States to develop policies and programs that help refugees become self-sufficient.<sup>292</sup> According to UNHCR's *Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018*, it is important to provide refugees and IDPs with legal and material instruments in order to improve the communities' prospects for employment.<sup>293</sup> In the context of UNHCR, legal instruments entail domestic legislation that can assist refugees during their stay in host countries, while material instruments refer to tangible solutions that benefit refugees, such as accommodation, social welfare, food, and transportation.<sup>294</sup> UNHCR remains committed to providing these instruments and will continue to play a key role in facilitating cooperation and building capacity for and among Member States to improve employment opportunities for refugees and IDPs.<sup>295</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

The strategy for improving employment opportunities for refugees and displaced persons intersects with one of the UN's most fundamental principles: the protection of human rights.<sup>296</sup> The legal framework for UNHCR's engagement in the protection of refugees finds its basis in article 14 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), which recognizes "the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."<sup>297</sup> Article 14 of the UDHR is also the legal background for the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*.<sup>298</sup> The 1951 Convention sets the legal framework for creating conditions that allow refugees to achieve self-reliance in countries of asylum by detailing that refugees possess economic rights within their host countries, including the right to access employment opportunities.<sup>299</sup> The 1967 Protocol outlines refugees' rights and the legal obligations of states to protect them.<sup>300</sup> Similarly, the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) aims to ensure the protection of refugees' economic rights, such as the ability to exercise employment freely and without discrimination.<sup>301</sup> Discrimination is one of the main obstacles impeding refugees and IDPs from attaining their right to employment.<sup>302</sup> On a regional level, the 1969 *OAU Refugee Convention* covers the rights of African refugees, such as education, employment and freedom of movement.<sup>303</sup> Likewise, the *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* is a regional document committed to help refugees in Latin America, and under conclusion 11, it outlines the importance of fair refugee employment.<sup>304</sup> Despite the existence of UDHR and ICESCR, as well as regional conventions, refugees and IDPs are still facing employment restrictions, including limited access to education and legal restrictions to work within their host countries.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*, 2019, p. 8; Gomez et al., *The Impacts of Refugees on Neighboring Countries: A Development Challenge*, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>292</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017.

<sup>293</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>296</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015; UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>297</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A(III))*, 1948.

<sup>298</sup> UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1951; UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1967.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*; UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 15.

<sup>303</sup> UNHCR, *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, 1974.

<sup>304</sup> UNHCR, *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees*, 1984, p. 37.

<sup>305</sup> De Vriese, *Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence*, 2006, p. 7.

Improving employment opportunities for refugees and displaced persons also works towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), which promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.<sup>306</sup> Closely linked are the 2016 *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* and its corresponding *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework* (CRRF).<sup>307</sup> Both of these revitalized the international community's pledge towards upholding human rights obligations towards refugees and IDPs.<sup>308</sup> The *New York Declaration* reaffirmed Member States' support to enhance refugee self-reliance under the SDGs framework.<sup>309</sup> Furthermore, under the individual Member States have taken steps to foster employment opportunities for refugees.<sup>310</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

The international system, specifically UNHCR, plays a key role in improving employment opportunities for refugees and IDPs.<sup>311</sup> The *Global Compact on Refugees* (Global Compact), which was affirmed in UN General Assembly resolution 73/151, promotes refugees' economic inclusion and encourages Member States and stakeholders to generate work opportunities for these populations.<sup>312</sup> Moreover, the Global Compact fosters activities to strengthen refugees' employment skills through training programs, such as language and vocational training.<sup>313</sup> Similarly, the *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2019-2023* presents a comprehensive review of multiple UNHCR programs that facilitate refugees' access to the labor market, such as those that involve partnerships with public and private entities.<sup>314</sup> The Global Strategy 2019-2023 is linked to the achievement of the Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs), which are targets set forth in UNHCR's biannual Global Appeals report.<sup>315</sup> The GSPs represent several areas in which UNHCR is attempting to strengthen protection, improve quality of life, and seek permanent solutions for the integration of refugees into the labor market of host countries.<sup>316</sup>

To meet the GSPs and other UNHCR priorities, multi-stakeholder partnerships are needed.<sup>317</sup> According to UNHCR, collaboration between international organizations, Member States, the private sector, and regional entities increases refugees' employment opportunities.<sup>318</sup> In the spirit of collaboration, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNHCR embarked on a multi-stakeholder action plan that aims to improve refugees' employment opportunities by strengthening relationships between employers, refugees, governments, and civil society.<sup>319</sup> This plan provides best practices that facilitate refugees' hiring process, such as providing individualized information for employers, mapping refugees' competences, and recognizing prior education of refugees.<sup>320</sup> In addition, the first Global Refugee Forum (GRF) was held in December 2019, bringing significant contributions from the private sector, including financial support of more than USD 250 million for refugees, direct employment opportunities for more than 15,000 refugees, more than 125,000 hours of pro bono legal

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<sup>306</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), 2015; UN DESA, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>307</sup> UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* (A/RES/71/1), 2016.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> UNHCR, *Global Update on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*, 2018.

<sup>311</sup> UNHCR, *A Practical Guide to Capacity Building as a Feature of UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes*, 2015.

<sup>312</sup> UNHCR, *Global Compact on Refugees*, 2018, p. 27.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>314</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>315</sup> UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2020-2021*, 2019, p. 27.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>318</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration: The 10-Point Plan in Action*, 2011, p. 10.

<sup>319</sup> OECD & UNHCR *Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees: A 10-Point Multi-Stakeholder Action Plan for Employers, Refugees, Governments and Civil Society*, 2018.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

services for refugees per year, as well as support for refugee women’s economic empowerment, business development, and innovative financing.<sup>321</sup>

Besides the participation of the private sector at the GRF, there have been additional members of civil society who have created several initiatives that aim to promote refugees’ economic integration, social immersion, and work skills.<sup>322</sup> The Center for Global Development (CGD) and Refugees International have joined efforts and created the “Let Them Work” initiative, which extends refugees’ access to formal labor markets.<sup>323</sup> Similarly, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been working with governments, businesses, and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve opportunities for refugees through the creation of different programs, including for refugee women’s financial independence.<sup>324</sup> Further, the Tent Partnership for Refugees, an international foundation, has worked alongside multiple companies in order to identify opportunities that sustainably integrate refugees into the labor market.<sup>325</sup> Thus far, the Tent Partnership has successfully mobilized the business community to improve the lives of more than 25 million refugees by encouraging multinational companies to include refugees as potential employees, entrepreneurs, and consumers.<sup>326</sup> Additionally, several corporations have created partnerships with UNHCR, demonstrating that private sector entities play a significant role in supporting UNHCR initiatives that improve employment opportunities for refugees and IDPs.<sup>327</sup> Such partnerships provide financial and technical support in field operations, which could create sustainable employment solutions for millions of refugees worldwide.<sup>328</sup>

### ***Obstacles to Improving Employment Opportunities***

Refugees and IDPs often experience obstacles that limit their opportunities to access employment, and those who manage to attain work frequently do so through the informal economy, which is the most unregulated labor sector, and as such, often poses economic and/or health risks to refugees.<sup>329</sup> Several of these employment obstacles are exacerbated when Member States lack proper national action plans that would otherwise allow them to efficiently manage the transition of refugees into the formal labor market.<sup>330</sup> UNHCR recognizes the importance of improving community safety and stability through incorporating refugees in the formal economic sector, with minimal impediments.<sup>331</sup> Moreover, allowing refugees and IDPs to access the formal economy improves their likelihood of attaining stable means of generating income and thus possibly avoid unsafe labor, criminal acts, and/or sexual exploitation.<sup>332</sup>

Besides the absence of domestic laws allowing refugees to engage in wage-earning employment or self-employment, there are other obstacles hindering an improvement of employment opportunities for these communities.<sup>333</sup> These barriers include: lack of language skills in the host country, negative social stigmas, unknown host country cultures, inadequate access to national asylum processes, complicated paperwork and working permits, limited access to education and/or training, and lack of information regarding job opportunities.<sup>334</sup> Many refugees have previously worked as professionals, yet they are often unable to prove it because they cannot access the necessary documents that validate their prior

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<sup>321</sup> UNHCR, *Summary of the first Global Refugee Forum by the Co-Convenors*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>322</sup> Zugasti et al., *Special Report: Civil Society Responses to Refugee Crisis*, 2016.

<sup>323</sup> Dempster et al., *Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees’ Economic Inclusion*, 2020, p. 4.

<sup>324</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Our Goals for Economic Wellbeing*, 2020.

<sup>325</sup> Mehta et.al, *A New Home at Work: An Employer’s Guidebook to Fostering Inclusion for Refugee Employees*, 2019, p. 2.

<sup>326</sup> Tent Partnership for Refugees, *A Global Business Coalition*, 2020.

<sup>327</sup> UNHCR, *Private Partners*, 2019.

<sup>328</sup> IKEA Foundation, *About*, 2016.

<sup>329</sup> ILO, *The Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market*, 2016.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>331</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: a UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, pp. 19-21.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>333</sup> Asylum Access & Refugee Work Rights Coalition, *Global Refugee Work Rights Report*, 2014, pp. 8-9.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

experience.<sup>335</sup> Moreover, many refugees have experienced emotional and psychological trauma and/or extraneous financial and personal challenges that impede them from finding proper employment.<sup>336</sup> Refugee women are the most vulnerable group within displaced populations because they often face additional obstacles, such as gender inequalities, gender-based discrimination, cultural gender barriers, and unfair payment.<sup>337</sup> A recent joint analysis carried out by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the IRC showed that, if given the proper employment capacities, refugee women could generate more than USD 1.2 trillion to annual global gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>338</sup> As such, UNHCR manages programs to assist refugee women to improve their skills so they may have more opportunities in the labor context.<sup>339</sup>

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, new economic challenges have arisen for refugees and IDPs, such as job losses, wage reduction, reduced remittances, and lower productivity.<sup>340</sup> The latest ILO data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the labor market shows that job losses are escalating, especially in the informal sector.<sup>341</sup> For refugees, the pandemic represents not only a health crisis, but also a socio-economic crisis that makes access to employment increasingly challenging.<sup>342</sup>

#### *Improving Skills, Training, and Language to Increase Employment Opportunities*

According to UNHCR, there are several ways through which Member States can improve livelihoods for refugees, most notably via skills development and economic self-reliance.<sup>343</sup> Economic self-reliance can be achieved through wage employment, skills training, language improvement opportunities, and safe value chains.<sup>344</sup> Safe value chains offer employment or livelihood opportunities for refugees, based on their skills, and do not expose them to major risks to their safety or wellbeing.<sup>345</sup> As part of their livelihood programming, UNHCR expanded its capacities for regional offices and field operations, developed self-reliance strategies, and built strategic partnerships with the private sector and NGOs.<sup>346</sup> Additionally, UNHCR has collaborated with Microsoft in creating the Microsoft and UNHCR App Factory in the Dzaleka, Malawi refugee camp, which aims to provide digital skills training and coding capabilities to the refugees residing within the camp, thereby increasing their employability.<sup>347</sup> Nonetheless, the current scope of UNHCR's skills programs is not reaching all refugees and IDPs.<sup>348</sup>

An analysis of 30 years of data carried out in Western Europe showed that refugees can contribute to the development of host country economies within five years of arrival.<sup>349</sup> Therefore, connecting humanitarian aid to long-term development-oriented responses allows refugees to positively impact the societies they work in.<sup>350</sup> UNHCR acknowledges that the varied skills refugees bring with them lead to market diversification, which benefits both refugees and host communities.<sup>351</sup> In addition, UNHCR supports steps taken by the private sector to promote refugees' employment opportunities, such as the "Training

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<sup>335</sup> UNHCR et al., *Tapping Potential: Guidelines to Help British Businesses Employ Refugees*, 2018, p. 9.

<sup>336</sup> London Metropolitan University, *Challenging Barriers to Employment for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in London*, 2005, p. 19.

<sup>337</sup> Liebig, *Triple Disadvantage?: A First Overview of the Integration of Refugee Women*, 2018, p. 10.

<sup>338</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Rescue Works: Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential*, 2019.

<sup>339</sup> UNHCR, *Women*, 2020.

<sup>340</sup> London Metropolitan University, *Challenging Barriers to Employment for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in London*, 2005, p. 20.

<sup>341</sup> ILO, *COVID-19: Stimulating the Economy and Employment*, 2020.

<sup>342</sup> Dempster et al., *Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Economic Inclusion*, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>343</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2016.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> UNHCR & ILO, *A Guide to Market-Based Livelihood Interventions for Refugees*, 2017, p. 14.

<sup>346</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2016, p. 14.

<sup>347</sup> Microsoft, *Increasing Access to Digital Skills Through Partnerships*, 2019.

<sup>348</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: A UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2016, p. 14.

<sup>349</sup> Maxmen, *Migrants and Refugees are Good for Economies*, 2018.

<sup>350</sup> OECD, *Assessing the Contribution of Refugees to the Development of Their Host Countries*, 2017, p. 2

<sup>351</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: a UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, pp. 19-21.

Perspectives for Refugees” program launched by Volkswagen, which prepares refugees for job integration by providing them intensive language courses and professional and personal training.<sup>352</sup>

### ***Ensuring the Legal & Financial Right to Work***

According to article 23.1 of the UDHR, article 6 of the ICESCR, and the UNHCR mandate, the right to work is a human right guaranteed and protected for all people.<sup>353</sup> International law, as well as regional instruments, establish that refugees and IDPs have the right to work and to receive an adequate wage.<sup>354</sup> However, due to the lack of national legal frameworks, the legal right to work for refugees and IDPs cannot be guaranteed.<sup>355</sup> Not having adequate legal opportunities and/or status may influence refugees to access the informal labor market, where there are no legal labor protections.<sup>356</sup> Thus, legal barriers remain one of the main impediments towards the improvement of employment opportunities for refugees.<sup>357</sup> In addition, refugees often face uncertainty regarding their duration of stay and their legal status in host countries.<sup>358</sup> This lack of legal status often implies limited legal protections regarding refugees’ right to work and/or their ability to travel within the host country for better employment.<sup>359</sup>

In several Member States, refugees and IDPs do not meet certain credit worthiness requirements.<sup>360</sup> This can include an inability of the refugee or IDP to produce a proof of income or to establish credit history, both of which are common requirements needed in order to utilize the host country’s financial services.<sup>361</sup> In many cases, these barriers may impede financial service providers (FSPs) and the private sector from assisting refugees, thereby creating additional hurdles for refugees to overcome.<sup>362</sup> These barriers can also disincentivize refugees from approaching formal financial institutions.<sup>363</sup> If a refugee or IDP does not have access to the host country’s FSPs, they are more likely to participate in the informal market.<sup>364</sup> Furthermore, when refugees are in the process of escaping from their country of origin, some lose their identification papers.<sup>365</sup> Accordingly, some refugees fear that official registration to regain their identification papers might increase their risk of being detained or deported, and in some cases, refugees may not even have access to registration.<sup>366</sup> One of the main avenues UNHCR is attempting to combat this is through its Population Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem (PRIMES).<sup>367</sup> Registration and identification of refugees is key for their legal, socio-economic, and digital inclusion; by the end of 2019 more than 8 million refugees were registered in PRIMES.<sup>368</sup> However, in cases where refugees manage to obtain UNHCR registration cards, relevant entities, such as employers and national authorities, may not always recognize the UNHCR registration cards as valid legal identification, once again limiting the access that refugees and displaced persons have to employment opportunities.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Volkswagen, *Volkswagen Supports 5,000 Refugees*, 2020.

<sup>353</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948; UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*, 1966, p. 4; UNHCR, *UNHCR Comments on the Draft General Comment on the Right to Just and Favourable Conditions of Work (Article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)*, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>354</sup> UNHCR, *Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations*, 2006, p. 52.

<sup>355</sup> Asylum Access, *Global Refugee Work Rights Report*, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>356</sup> Zetter & Ruadel, *Refugees’ Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets – An Assessment*, 2016 p. 9.

<sup>357</sup> UNHCR, *Serving Refugee Populations: The Next Financial Inclusion Frontier*, 2017, p. 9.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>365</sup> Sylvester, *Beyond Making Ends Meet: Urban Refugees and Microfinance*, 2011.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> UNHCR, *From proGres to PRIMES*, 2018.

<sup>368</sup> UNHCR, *Registration and Identity Management, 2020*; Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme, *Report on UNHCR’s Global Strategic Priorities, 2020*, p. 4.

<sup>369</sup> Sylvester, *Beyond Making Ends Meet: Urban Refugees and Microfinance*, 2011.

UNHCR has further outlined important steps towards ensuring the right to work for refugees and IDPs, some of which include: defining specific targets to build a favorable policy environment for refugee self-reliance; access to FSPs; the right to business ownership; work permits; and freedom of movement.<sup>370</sup> In addition, Social Performance Task Force, a global financial services non-profit, partnered with UNHCR and issued guidelines for financial services that explain why refugees are financially excluded and proposes ways for FSPs to successfully reach and serve this financial market segment.<sup>371</sup> The right to work also allows for more interaction between refugees and host communities and may contribute to building a peaceful and integrated society.<sup>372</sup>

### **Barriers to Education**

UNHCR considers access to education one of the most important means to improve employment opportunities for refugees.<sup>373</sup> According to UNHCR's *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*, access to quality education is the foundation for ensuring that refugees gain the skills and competencies to successfully integrate into local economies.<sup>374</sup> Refugees and IDPs are facing various educational barriers.<sup>375</sup> These barriers are often intertwined, and as a result, require tailored strategies that address their complexity.<sup>376</sup> The *Declaration on the Future of Education* by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) outlined that education can play a major role in ensuring improved employment opportunities while also encouraging sustainable development.<sup>377</sup> It is important to note that UNHCR differentiates between several levels of education: basic education, life-skill education, primary, secondary, tertiary, and non-formal education.<sup>378</sup> According to UNHCR's Education Field Guidelines, completion of the full cycle of education increases the likelihood of sustainable livelihoods and promotes safer refugee communities and self-reliance.<sup>379</sup> However, refugees still face limited access to schooling and are unable to complete the full cycle of education.<sup>380</sup> Furthermore, 48% of all refugee children are out of school, which implies having less opportunities to improve their skills.<sup>381</sup>

UNHCR categorizes barriers hindering access to education, which in turn impact employment opportunities, as hard and soft barriers.<sup>382</sup> Soft barriers are defined as those that exist within an education setting, such as racial or other forms of discrimination and bullying, which in many cases may cause refugees to stop attending school.<sup>383</sup> Hard barriers include mostly legal and financial barriers, as discussed previously, as well as a lack of sufficient capacity in educational establishments, all of which can act as obstacles towards school enrollment.<sup>384</sup> UNHCR's Education Strategy aims to act as a blueprint in providing a sustainable learning environment for refugees to attain their primary education.<sup>385</sup> Additionally, the quality of education itself can also act as a barrier for refugees in accessing employment

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<sup>370</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: a UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, pp. 19-21.

<sup>371</sup> Pistelli, *Removing Barriers to Expand Access to Finance for Refugees*, CGAP, 2017.

<sup>372</sup> UNHCR, *Serving Refugee Populations: The Next Financial Inclusion Frontier*, 2017, p. 10.

<sup>373</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*, 2019, p. 8.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>375</sup> Educate A Child, *Barriers to Education and Strategies to Address Them*.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> UNICEF, *World Education Forum Adopts Declaration on the Future of Education*, 2015.

<sup>378</sup> UNHCR, *Education: Field Guidelines*, 2003, p. 59.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>380</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *The Educational Experience of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum*, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>381</sup> UNHCR, *Coming Together for Refugee Education*, 2020, p. 9.

<sup>382</sup> UNHCR & REACH, *Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon: Out of School Children Profiling Report*, 2014, pp. 12-13.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13; Dryden-Peterson, *The Educational Experience of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum*, 2015, pp. 1-2.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-18.

<sup>385</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021*, 2017, p. 23.

opportunities.<sup>386</sup> This is emphasized in situations where the quality of education is low or when refugees are placed into education programs that are below their knowledge level and thus do not allow refugees to learn new skills.<sup>387</sup> In addition, UNHCR recognizes the importance of working in collaboration with the private sector as a measure to tackle these educational barriers for refugees.<sup>388</sup> As such, UNHCR has joined efforts with United World Colleges by providing 100 scholarships for secondary education to refugees and IDPs.<sup>389</sup> Furthermore, UNHCR and Educate A Child have worked together to launch an initiative that aims to provide quality education for refugees and IDPs.<sup>390</sup> Kiron University, an online university for refugees, has also played a unique role in providing access to free higher education for refugees and IDPs.<sup>391</sup>

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected education for refugees and IDPs by limiting in-person classes and forcing the closure of educational institutions, which in turn increases inequalities in education and makes it increasingly difficult to improve employment opportunities for refugees.<sup>392</sup> The UN has published the *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19*, which proposes recommendations that governments and stakeholders could follow in order to prevent a learning crisis from becoming a generational catastrophe.<sup>393</sup> These recommendations include: suppressing transmission of the virus, planning thoroughly for school re-openings, protecting education financing, building resilient education systems, and adapting teaching and learning methods to meet current challenges.<sup>394</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Emphasized in the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, the UDHR, and UNHCR's mandate, improving employment opportunities is a necessary component for refugees' self-reliance and is needed in order to allow refugees to fully integrate into their host communities.<sup>395</sup> With the *Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2019-2023* and the 2030 Agenda, current approaches towards improving employment opportunities for refugees are enhanced; nonetheless, more can be achieved.<sup>396</sup> Employment opportunities for refugees and IDPs can still be improved, specifically through education, cultural integration, promotion of livelihoods, and curtailing legal and financial barriers that impede refugees from seeking or maintaining employment.<sup>397</sup> Additionally, vulnerable groups, which include women, children, and elderly people, need to be integrated into strategic approaches, and recommendations need to be mindful of different contexts and the unique situation of each Member State.<sup>398</sup> With a rising number of displaced persons and the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has to adapt and further develop current plans to secure a sustainable approach towards improving employment opportunities and creating self-reliance

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<sup>386</sup> Dryden-Peterson, *The Educational Experience of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum*, 2015, pp. 1-2; De Vriese, *Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence*, 2006, p. 7; UNHCR, *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solution in Urban Areas*, p. 7.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Education 2030*, 2019.

<sup>389</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Report: Building Better Futures*, 2017, p. 218.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>391</sup> Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia et al., *Successful Integration of Refugee Students in Higher Education: Insights from Entry Diagnostics in an Online Study Program*, 2018, p.160.

<sup>392</sup> UNHCR, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugee Education*, 2020.

<sup>393</sup> UN, *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19*, 2020, p. 3.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>395</sup> Gomez et al., *The Impacts of Refugees on Neighboring Countries: a Development Challenge*, 2010, p. 12; UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: a UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 7; UNHCR, *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*, 2019, p. 8; ILO, *The Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market*, 2016.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> UNHCR, *Global Strategy for Livelihoods: a UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018*, 2014, p. 7; UNHCR, *Stepping Up: Refugee Education in Crisis*, 2019, p. 6.

mechanisms.<sup>399</sup> Improving employment opportunities for refugees and displaced persons is thus a multifaceted process involving numerous actors working alongside UNHCR.<sup>400</sup>

### **Further Research**

Reflecting on the challenges ahead, delegates should consider the following questions: How can improving employment opportunities be ensured through durable solutions? How can the international community provide sustainable employment opportunities for vulnerable groups? Delegates should also consider what creative and innovative ways can be found to improve employment opportunities for refugees and displaced persons. Which partnerships are needed to provide employment opportunities? In what way can new technologies be used more efficiently to improve employment opportunities for refugees and displaced persons? What specific actions can UNHCR request from Member States to improve job opportunities for refugees and IDPs? What strategies can be followed by Member States, NGOs, and/or the private sector to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees' socio-economic situation?

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*This recent report sets out the progress made towards UNHCR's global strategic priorities for 2018-2019. It covers the operational GSPs as well as the support and management of GSPs. The report reiterates the commitment of supporting people of concern by providing them with durable solutions, including job improvement for refugees. Also, this report provides information about UNHCR's work with other partners to build up a national protection system for refugees and IDPs. In addition, this report covers data on PRIMES, ProGres v4 and BIMS, all of which are registration and employment related programs for refugees. Delegates may use this resource to have a clear perspective on the efforts made by UNHCR to meet the GSPs and thereby facilitate economic inclusion for refugees.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *Global Compact on Refugees*. Retrieved 16 September 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4>

*The Global Compact on Refugees (Global Compact) is an international agreement representing UNHCR's most recent response to the integration of refugees and IDPs. The Global Compact promotes the inclusive economic growth of refugees and encourages Member States and stakeholders to contribute resources and expertise that will assist in generating stable work opportunities. The Global Compact is based on four main objectives that include: ease pressures on host countries, enhance refugees' self-reliance, expand access to third country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. Also, it proposes a multi-stakeholder approach to enable more opportunities for private sector investment in refugee employment and it supports refugees' and host communities' labor mobility. Delegates should pay close attention to this document as it outlines UNHCR's strategies and discusses possible approaches to achieve them, which will allow delegates to determine which strategies they may realistically implement.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *Global Appeal 2020-2021*. Retrieved 15 September 2020 from: [https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2020/pdf/Global\\_Appeal\\_2020\\_full\\_lowres.pdf](https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2020/pdf/Global_Appeal_2020_full_lowres.pdf)

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*, 2019.

*UNHCR regularly produces its Global Appeal, and this is the most recent document covering 2020-2021. This is a comprehensive document, which contains an overview of 2020 regarding UNHCR's work related to refugees and IDPs. It covers regional summaries that describe steps taken by different Member States and UNHCR to develop programs that strengthen national protection systems, facilitate access to employment, promote inclusion in national systems, and identify sustainable solutions for refugees and IDPs. Delegates should use this document to increase their understanding on how UNHCR is securing durable solutions for refugees and IDPs, including joint action plans with the private and public sectors, as well as the steps UNHCR is taking to provide refugees and IDPs guidance on finding employment opportunities.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*. Retrieved 16 July 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf>

*This is a UNHCR annual report that shows data on global trends of forcibly displaced populations. This report analyzes populations of concern and keeps track of the number of people who were forced to flee. In addition, it uses statistical data to inform and optimize UNHCR's work and the work of its partners to better protect and provide solutions for refugees. With this report, delegates can analyze how UNHCR is meeting the needs of refugees and other displaced populations around the globe and how statistics help organizations and states to develop a better response to refugee crises.*

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2019). *Refugee Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion: 2019-2023 Global Strategy Concept Note*. Retrieved 15 September 2020 from: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/operations/5bc07ca94/refugee-livelihoods-economic-inclusion-2019-2023-global-strategy-concept.html>

*This document provides strategy guidelines to UNHCR operations related to livelihoods and economic inclusion programs for refugees. It states that access to labor markets in the host countries promotes self-reliance and resilience of refugees, which in turn prevents aid-dependency and negative coping mechanisms, thus allowing refugees to become self-dependent. This document allows delegates to comprehend that promoting livelihoods is an important avenue towards improving employment opportunities, and will allow delegates to evaluate the strategies proposed by UNHCR for refugees to enter the labor market.*

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development & Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018). *Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees: A 10-Point Multi-Stakeholder Action Plan for Employers, Refugees, Governments and Civil Society*. Retrieved 16 July 2020 from: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/UNHCR-OECD-Engaging-with-employers-in-the-hiring-of-refugees.pdf>

*This is an action plan based on comprehensive consultations with employers and other stakeholders who play a key role in the promotion of refugees' integration into the host country's labor market. It outlines challenges and opportunities relating to hiring refugees, as well as actions that support successful refugee employment. Such actions include navigating administrative frameworks effectively, providing employers with sufficient legal certainty, identifying and verifying refugees' skills, developing skills for job-readiness, matching refugees' talent with employers' needs, providing equal opportunities in recruitment and combat stereotypes, preparing the working environment, enabling long-term employability, elaborating business cases for hiring refugees, and coordinating actions between all stakeholders. In addition, this action plan provides a key stakeholders' action checklist that may give delegates insight into the steps stakeholders need to take to facilitate refugee employment. Delegates may use this source when thinking of how their Member State or organization can approach the improvement of employment opportunities for refugees.*

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