



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

**2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNHCR Statement
From Commitment to Action**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

It is a pleasure to appear before this Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I would like to express my profound thanks to the Government of Mexico for hosting this tremendously important gathering with such gracious hospitality.

The world's refugees, persons displaced, and persons at risk of displacement have an important stake in the success of this Global Platform. This is no marginal concern. Today, more than 60 million people around the globe have been uprooted by conflict and persecution; these persons are among those most vulnerable and exposed to natural hazards. The majority live in disaster prone areas and climate change hotspots. Refugee camps and settlements are often sited on land that was not traditionally seen as suitable for human settlement. Those living in camps and settlements are many times more likely than the general population to suffer the effects of floods, landslides, severe storms and other natural hazards. Having been forced to flee conflict and persecution, many refugees and displaced persons are displaced yet again by disasters.

Furthermore, disasters are increasingly recognized as drivers of displacement. Our colleagues at the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre note that an annual average of 24.5 million people are displaced internally in the context of disasters. Disasters caused by natural hazards can also exacerbate social tensions and act as an accelerator of armed conflict, which may result in displacement. For example, persistent droughts can bring pastoralist farmers and nomadic herders into competition for scarce natural resources, such as water and land.

With these considerations in mind, UNHCR calls upon the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction include in the chairman's summary a meaningful recognition of the displacement dimension – the displacement reality – of disasters. We are encouraged that the Sendai Framework includes provisions on displacement and human mobility, including planned relocation. Now is the time to transform these commitments into action.

Since the adoption of the Sendai Framework in 2015, UNHCR has made progress on the targets set for disaster risk reduction within our own work. For example: In 2016 UNHCR launched a pilot disaster risk screening initiative in selected refugee operations in Eastern Africa. The objective of the screening initiative was to understand the ways and extent to which refugee operations are affected by disasters, to define the options to reduce the risk to people of concern, and to take stock of the capacities within UNHCR and broader international partners to address these risks. The study found that disasters pose serious threats to the refugee operations, cutting across many sectors, and the need for integrating disaster risks into the planning and budgeting of the operations. UNHCR also organized a Training Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Kigali (18-20 April 2017) following disaster risk screenings to build the awareness of UNHCR, Partners and government staff in the target countries. UNHCR has further begun drafting its plan of action on DRR for field operations.

In addition, UNHCR supports the Platform on Disaster Displacement to implement the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, endorsed by 109 countries in 2015, which includes provisions to manage disaster displacement risks in country of origin to prevent cross-border disaster displacement. UNHCR and partners developed Guidance on Planned Relocations in the context of disasters, which if undertaken in consultation with affected communities and from a protection-sensitive approach, can

be a disaster risk reduction strategy to minimize risk of future disaster displacement. Alongside Georgetown University, UNHCR is now working to translate this principled guidance to operational tools for states contemplating and implementing planned relocations. Finally, in 2017 and 2018 UNHCR committed to contribute to development of a 'Words Into Action: Implementation Guide for the Sendai Framework' on questions of mobility, displacement, relocation and evacuation.

Looking to the future, we call upon the global community to consider that a 'people-centred' protection perspective is integral for effective Disaster Risk Reduction: persons already displaced, or at risk of displacement, need to be recognized as having unique protection needs related to their history of mobility and hazard exposure. At the same time, displaced populations have developed incredible resilience and have skills and capacities to offer to host communities in disaster risk reduction activities.

For these reasons, we hope to see the Sendai Framework provisions transformed into action, to ensure that displacement and human mobility is integrated into regional, national, and local DRR policy and practice.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for your attention.