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United Nations support to the African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa

Issues paper

I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-first Ordinary Session, held in Nouakchott on 1 and 2 July 2018, the Assembly of the African Union declared 2019 to be the “African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”. In addition, 2019 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). The African Union contributed significantly to the negotiation and adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by the General Assembly on 17 and 19 December 2018, respectively.

2. The compacts advance the debate and action on wide-ranging elements and aspects of forced displacement considerably. The Global Compact on Refugees, designed to provide a robust and systematic model to improve the lives of refugees and their host communities, provides a basis for the predictable and equitable burden and sharing of responsibility among all Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration was adopted in Marrakech, Morocco, on 10 December 2018 by 164 Member States as a non-binding agreement. It includes a wide range of commitments and actions embodied in a set of 23 objectives aimed at addressing the numerous challenges associated with unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration, while also recognizing and respecting a broad range of migrant rights. Both instruments emanated from the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

3. In that context, the present issues paper contains an examination of key issues on forced displacement in Africa in keeping with the “African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”. It is intended to inform the high-level panel discussions on the same topic at the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), to be held in Marrakech on 23 and 24 March 2019 on the margins of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The theme of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa is in keeping with the practice of aligning the annual theme of the Mechanism with that of the African Union in support of the continental body’s annual priority area.

II. Overview of the situation concerning refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa

A. Significance and causal factors

4. Over a third of the world’s forcibly displaced persons are in Africa south of the Sahara, including 6.3 million refugees and asylum seekers and 14.5 million internally displaced persons. The numbers increased considerably in 2018, with some 170,000 new refugees and over two million new internally displaced persons, mainly from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan.

5. While Africa south of the Sahara accounts for only 14 per cent of the world’s population, but almost half of new conflict displacement took place in the region. There were 5.5 million new displacements associated with conflict and violence in 2017, which is the last year for which official statistics are available. That number is double the figure for 2016. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was hardest hit in 2017, with almost 2.2 million new displacements. That figure was more than twice the number recorded by the country in 2016, and exceeded the displacements recorded in the next three worst-affected countries in the region combined. In Ethiopia in 2018, local conflict was the source of a wave of internal displacements.

6. Even though the conflicts in both the Central African Republic and South Sudan exhibit tentative signs of negotiated political solutions, with the signing of peace agreements, insecurity continues to consign a considerable number of people into forced displacement and to prevent the return of a significant majority of those who have fled the fighting. Fighting continued in Cameroon, Mali and the border regions of Burkina Faso and the Niger, forcing even more people away from their homes. Burundi remained volatile, with continued outflows of people to Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Central African Republic, Ethiopia and South Sudan together accounted for more than 2.1 million new displacements in 2017, a figure that increased dramatically in 2018, with the escalation of displacements in Ethiopia.

7. The causes of forced displacement in Africa are well known and widely acknowledged. Among the leading drivers of conflict are poor governance, human rights violations, environmental issues, and social and economic inequalities. The severity of the phenomenon has been tempered somewhat by the impressive tradition of protecting the forcibly displaced in Africa. Nevertheless, forced displacement presents serious challenges to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, both of which consider inclusiveness and the mantra of “leaving no one behind” as being central to the achievement of sustainable development.

8. Climate change is being manifested in the form of an increased frequency of devastating droughts, the results of which are severe food insecurity and

consequent forced displacement. Both the forcibly displaced and host communities are affected. A combination of conflict and loss of livelihoods – attributed to diminishing grazing land and loss of livestock – continues to cause displacement in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, fuelling attacks by extremist groups and triggering displacement in many African countries. Conflicts over other natural resources, including precious stones, minerals and oil, have also triggered some of the worst violence and largest waves of displacement in the region.

9. In terms of economic inequalities, according to projections in the 2018 *African Economic Outlook*, African economies have been resilient and gaining momentum. Real output growth was estimated to have increased 3.6 per cent in 2017, with projected growth of 4.1 per cent in 2018 and 2019. However, the region's recent appreciable growth rates in gross domestic product were not accompanied by corresponding job creation and real increases in wages. Slow job growth has primarily affected women and young people aged 15 to 24. In 2015, the estimated population of young people in Africa was 226 million, a figure projected to increase 42 per cent by 2030, to 321 million. The lack of job growth has slowed the reduction in poverty. Although the proportion of poor people in Africa declined from 56 per cent in 1990 to 43 per cent in 2012, the absolute number of poor people increased. Inequality also increased, with the Gini coefficient rising from 0.52 in 1993 to 0.56 in 2008, the latest figure available. Lack of employment and other livelihood opportunities lead to the heightened risk of discontent, social unrest and conflict that result in people being internally displaced or becoming seeking refugee status.

B. Returnees

10. Most returnees in Africa were former refugees from Nigeria (282,800) who returned to their own country, mainly from Cameroon (150,000) and the Niger (132,400). The second-largest number of refugee returns was reported by the Central African Republic (78,600), mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (33,500), Chad (28,500) and Cameroon (16,500). It should be noted, however, that the reported statistics refer to returns and not voluntary repatriation.

11. Burundi reported 70,600 refugee returns; the country of asylum of most of those returns (57,400) was not known, with 13,100 reported from the United Republic of Tanzania. Additionally, nationals of Somalia returned to their country from Kenya (35,400) and Yemen (5,500). Other countries with significant returnees in 2017 were Rwanda (18,100), and the Sudan (11,700). More people returned to Libya than were displaced in 2017, but conflict between local militias in several areas of the country still led to about 29,000 new displacements.

12. In former countries of asylum, the largest number of departures was from Cameroon (166,600), mainly to Nigeria (150,000) and the Central African Republic (16,500). Other countries reporting a large number of departures were the Niger (134,600, mostly to Nigeria), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (51,600, to the Central African Republic and Rwanda), Chad (38,900, to the Central African Republic and the Sudan), Kenya (35,400, to Somalia) and the United Republic of Tanzania (13,100, to Burundi). In relation to internally displaced persons, 386,200 nationals of the Sudan and 381,800 nationals of Nigeria returned to their areas of origin.

13. Continuing fragility in the security situation in many of the countries of return imply returns are not always indicative of durable solutions for displaced populations, who therefore remain at risk of further displacement.

C. Statelessness

14. The Global Compact on Refugees recognizes that statelessness may be both a cause and consequence of refugee movements. The Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons defines a stateless person as someone who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law. While in theory human rights are premised on the inherent dignity of all individuals, in practice nationality is the precursor to the exercise of many rights; stateless individuals therefore experience a range of human rights violations and severe marginalization.

15. Statelessness is a legal anomaly that can come about from conflicts between, or gaps in, methods of nationality attribution; for administrative or procedural reasons, such as a lack of access to birth registration; from state succession or the transfer of territory; and as a result of gender-based and other forms of discrimination. The latter is the main cause of statelessness globally and in Africa. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports over 710,000 stateless persons in Africa, though the actual number is likely to be much higher. States in Africa recently worked to reduce and prevent statelessness through law reform introducing safeguards to prevent childhood statelessness, improved birth registration and national identification (ID) documentation, amending nationality laws to remove gender discrimination and by recognizing certain long-time resident groups as nationals.

16. The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights does not recognize any right to a nationality. However, the African Union, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, has done significant work on the issue in recent years. In 2013, that Commission adopted its resolution 234, on the right to nationality, in which it requested that African states take the necessary measures to strengthen civil registration services to ensure the prompt registration of the births of all children on their territory, without discrimination. In 2014, the same Commission published a major study entitled "The right to nationality in Africa" and began work on a draft protocol to the African Charter on the right to a nationality in Africa. In 2018, the draft protocol was adopted by the Specialized Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the African Union. It will be reviewed by the Specialized Technical Committee on Legal Affairs in 2019, after which it will be submitted to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union for adoption.

17. The Global Compact on Refugees encourages States, UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders to contribute resources and expertise to support the sharing of good, gender-sensitive practices for the prevention and reduction of statelessness, and the development of, as appropriate, national and regional and international action plans to end statelessness. In the Compact, States that have not yet acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness are encouraged to consider doing so.

D. Mixed movements

18. Refugees are a subset of large mixed movements, which include migrants and which present complex and persistent protection and humanitarian challenges for Africa. Refugees and migrants in the region use three main migration routes: (a) the north-west route converging on the central Mediterranean Sea and crossing into Europe mainly through Libya; (b) the north-east route transiting Somalia or Djibouti across the Red Sea, converging in Yemen and into the Gulf States; and (c) the southern route into South Africa.

19. Movements from Africa along the northern route through Libya to Europe, the southern route to South Africa, the eastern route to Gulf countries

or towards neighbouring African countries are mixed in nature. The reason for such variability is that most asylum seekers and refugees, in search of safety, travel alongside and use the same routes as migrants in search of economic opportunity. In response to such flows, States members of the European Union have responded increasingly with restrictive migration policies and more restrictive entry systems, in particular in the central Mediterranean, making it more difficult for persons in need of international protection to seek asylum in the European Union. Myriad reasons, including security concerns and pressure on their economies, have been given to explain such measures.

20. The impact of the movement of refugees to Europe in 2015 and 2016 was seen in the growing refugee population as the backlog of asylum applications was gradually processed during 2017. In particular, the refugee population in Germany increased by 45 per cent, with substantive decisions made on over half a million cases. Movements of people across the Mediterranean decreased compared with 2016. Numbers significantly declined for the eastern Mediterranean crossing beginning in April 2016 and for the central Mediterranean since July 2017. Nonetheless, many people continued to risk their lives traversing the sea, with the majority arriving in Italy, where some 126,500 new asylum seekers submitted applications in 2017.

III. Women and young people

A. Women

21. Among the countries in Africa reporting sex-disaggregated data in 2017, the female proportion of refugees was 56 per cent in Chad and Togo, and 31 per cent in Angola. A 2018 study by the Mixed Migration Centre extensively documents the experiences of female refugees and migrants in origin, transit and destination countries.

22. It is common for women to be faced with abuses across various regions. In Libya, in particular where part of the journey takes travellers through the desert, levels of human rights abuses suffered at the hands of smugglers or in detention centres are acute. The high cost of migration, which can range from 5,500 to 60,000 euros is a source of financial stress that makes women more vulnerable and leaves them with few options for earning money, sometimes leading to sex work as the only route open to them. Further concerns about protection relate to information about African refugees and migrants being sold as slaves in Libya. They are held in facilities and rented out for labour and sexual exploitation, often held for ransom unless they have relatives able to pay for their release and onward migration. There are also reports of trafficking in persons for the removal of organs.

23. The increased vulnerability of women is a function of factors including traditional gender roles, their role as primary care givers, increased risks of drowning (owing to pregnancy or heavy clothing) and relative lack of access to mobile telephones and communications. Without a telephone, women are more vulnerable to abuse and possess little control over what happens to them on the move.

B. Young people

24. Economic exclusion and the lack of opportunities force young people to migrate in search of opportunities, resulting in civil unrest from which they have emerged as refugees. Most humanitarian organizations, including UNHCR, have limited data on young people aged 15 to 24 years who are refugees; reliable statistics on the actual number of young people who are refugees globally are therefore not available. However, the surge in the proportion of young people in countries of origin, including those in Africa,

suggests that the 15 to 24 years age group forms a large proportion of the refugee population. By the end of 2017, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda had all hosted refugee populations that consisted of more than 60 per cent children.

25. The marginalization, isolation and hardship of forced displacement can increase young refugee vulnerability to violence, including sexual violence, exploitation, substance abuse, radicalization and recruitment into gangs or armed groups. Other major challenges that young refugees face include difficulties in accessing the following: high-quality teaching, formal education, and skill-building opportunities; employment and livelihood opportunities; and legal recognition and personal documents. Such refugees also live in a context where safety, security and freedom of movement are compromised. The search for solutions to the challenges that young refugees face should take into account the motivation, energy, entrepreneurship, language abilities, technological savvy and other capabilities and skills of this demographic. Young refugees play essential roles in supporting their peers, families and communities.

26. African Governments should harness the demographic dividend to shape and absorb the capacities of young people in the areas of education, health, employment, governance and civic engagement, among others. The digital economy offers the potential for Africa to provide new productive jobs for its young people, who are typically quick at adapting to new technologies and developing new digital solutions.

IV. Durable solutions

A. Refugees

27. Africa is one of the standard bearers in the implementation of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, and in advancing the “whole-of-society” comprehensive refugee response approach. That approach recognizes that humanitarian action needs to be supported by targeted development responses in order to manage large-scale refugee situations. The Framework is being applied in eight countries – Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and Zambia – and includes a regional approach, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, for the situation involving refugees from Somalia.

28. Furthermore, 13 countries are implementing multi-year, multi-partner strategies, namely Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, the Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Such strategies comprise a progressive approach to protection and solutions that applies a longer-term vision to helping people of concern and their hosts, putting them at the centre of planning and priority setting in the areas they live, and providing support to national systems, institutions and civil society. Such strategies are currently being translated into their 2019 operational plans. Owing to their focus on improving long-term planning for solutions and protection by working more concertedly with partners, the strategies serve as a vehicle for the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. The Framework adds two potential durable solution pathways: “other local solutions” and complementary pathways for admission to third countries.

B. Local integration

29. One of the three durable solutions for refugees is local integration; the other two are repatriation and resettlement. Local integration involves a refugee finding a permanent home in the country of asylum and integrating into the

local community. Several countries facilitated the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, as foreseen in article 34 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In Guinea-Bissau, the Government granted citizenship to refugees from Senegal living in a protracted situation.

30. The Government of Liberia is making progress on the naturalization of 300 former refugees from Sierra Leone and has agreed to implement a national framework for the local integration of refugees. The Government of Zambia started issuing temporary residency permits to former refugees from Rwanda – more than 1,470 issued to date – which will facilitate their stay and participation in the socioeconomic development of their host communities.

C. Resettlement

31. Resettlement continues to serve as a protection tool to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable refugees. After a steady increase in resettlement submissions from Africa between 2012 and 2016, the trend reversed in 2017, with just over 21,500 refugees submitted for resettlement, owing to a drop in available places, a 51 per cent decrease compared with 2016. Departures for resettlement countries also declined from 38,900 in 2016 to 15,800 in 2017. Around 60 per cent of all submissions from the region involved refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by Eritrea, Somalia and the Sudan.

D. Internally displaced persons

32. Durable solutions for the forcibly displaced is a complex, gradual, often long-term process requiring coordinated multi-stakeholder engagement, including strong Government leadership, with the support of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for internally displaced persons provides eight criteria for assessing durable solutions for such persons, regardless of the nature of durable solution, including long-term safety security and freedom of movement; an adequate standard of living; access to employment and livelihoods; and access to mechanisms for the restoration of housing, land and property or compensation for losses.

33. Furthermore, internally displaced persons should benefit without discrimination from access to and replacement of personal and other documentation; voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement; participation in public affairs at all levels on an equal basis with the resident population; effective remedies for displacement-related violations including access to justice, reparations and information about the causes of violations. Many of these criteria for durable solutions constitute commitments articulated in the Kampala Convention.

E. Development approach

34. Historically, attempts to use development assistance to enhance refugee access to self-reliance were mainly conceived in State-centric terms. They were premised upon the idea of development assistance being a relationship between donor States and host States. Evidence suggests that interventions were successful when a series of conditions were met. First, donor States needed to provide “additionality” in development assistance. Second, host States needed to be willing to recognize that additional development assistance could serve as an incentive that could help them open up to refugees and create opportunities for refugee self-reliance. Third, humanitarian and development agencies needed to work together effectively to implement projects that could credibly benefit hosts, donors and the displaced.

35. Today, opportunities abound to think more broadly about how development relates to refugees. The keys to accessing opportunities to enhance self-reliance may include the private sector; an innovative approach; and the recognition of the skills, talents and aspirations of displaced populations. Yet, realizing these opportunities relies upon developing a new way of understanding the economic lives and impact of displaced populations. Thus, the development-displacement nexus matters. In the African context, free movement of persons, trade, particularly intra-African trade, and digitization are three important avenues for promoting self-actualization of forcibly displaced persons.

V. Displacement and development

36. Forced displacement has a complex correlation with development. According to the 2018 *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, human and state security, economic growth and social stability are impossible to achieve in countries that have large numbers of people living in protracted displacement or who face recurring displacement and high levels of risk. Displacement is both a cause and consequence of insecurity and low or unequal economic and social development. Thus, displacement is both a growing humanitarian crisis and an obstacle to development.

37. Just as displacement can result from poor economic and social development and human security, it also threatens development gains and heightens human vulnerability in the process. The situations in Nigeria and South Sudan are illustrative in that regard. The disruption of livelihoods caused by the shrinking of Lake Chad has undermined economic growth in Nigeria, paving the way for the rise of Boko Haram, counter-insurgency operations and widespread displacement. Armed conflict and displacement in South Sudan have exacerbated food insecurity because farmers are unable to cultivate their crops. They have also disrupted markets and driven up food prices, undermining people's resilience to other shocks.

38. Large-scale internal displacement has severe social and economic impacts, not just for those displaced but also for communities of origin, host communities and countries. Studies have highlighted seven major areas in which internal displacement may affect an economy, namely through impacts on housing and infrastructure, livelihoods, social and cultural factors, education, health, security and the environment. There is a need for systematic and quantitative assessments of the impacts of displacements on local and national economies and attempts to cost them coherently and comprehensively at the global level. This will inform the case for investment and encourage countries and their development partners to focus their attention on the trade-offs inherent in the setting of national priorities and development and humanitarian budgeting.

VI. Free movement of persons, trade and refugees

39. As noted in Agenda 2063, free movement of persons in Africa is an integration aspiration, but it is also a development enabler. The adoption of the Protocol on Free Movement, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment at the African Union Summit in January 2018 signified an important step forward for the African integration agenda. In addition to enhancing the rights of citizens of Africa to entry, residence and establishment in African Union member States, the Protocol is key to development in Africa and provides an opportunity to find tangible solutions to the migration challenges faced by the continent. The African passport will become a reality once 15 countries have ratified the Protocol. As at 31 March 2018, 31 countries had signed the Protocol; however, only one country, Rwanda, had ratified it. A study of the African Union Commission and the International Organization for Migration

concluded that free movement of Africans throughout the continent, if implemented incrementally alongside appropriate systems and procedures, could be a positive force for increasing trade, tourism and industrialization.

40. The Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area will enter into force once it has been ratified by 22 member States. The Agreement will cover a market of 1.2 billion people and a gross domestic product of \$2.5 trillion across all the 55 member States of the African Union. As at 11 January 2019, ratification stood at 16 countries, making imminent its entry into force. The Free Trade Area is projected to promote industrial development in Africa, which will create new opportunities, in particular for young people. The Free Trade Area will also contribute to addressing the refugee and migration situation in the region. Several countries in Africa, including Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, are promoting a “self-reliance strategy”. In Uganda, refugees can establish businesses, many of which trade with and employ host nationals. In Kenya, the model is creating greater opportunities for agriculture and entrepreneurship, and a shared marketplace for refugees and the local population. In Ethiopia, the Government is building state-of-the-art industrial zones, which will provide jobs to nationals and to refugees from 2019.

VII. Digitization: forcible displacement and statelessness

41. As acknowledged in the Global Compact on Refugees, civil and birth registration helps States to gain access to accurate information on the persons living on their territory; such registration is also a major tool for protection and solutions, including for refugee women, girls and others with specific needs. While it does not necessarily lead to conferral of nationality, birth registration helps establish legal identity and prevent the risk of statelessness. In support of host countries, the Compact called on States and relevant stakeholders to contribute resources and expertise to strengthen the capacity of national civil registries to facilitate timely access by refugees and stateless persons, as appropriate, to civil and birth registration and documentation. Some ways in which that could be done is through digital technology and the provision of mobile services, subject to full respect for data protection and privacy principles.

42. Civil registration and vital statistics are an essential administrative system in modern society. The civil registry provides individuals with legal documents required to secure their identity, nationality, civil rights and access to social services. The linkage and integration of civil registration and ID management systems enable robust and sustainable digital identification, prevents duplication of efforts, saves resources and time, and enables efficient public service delivery. Although digital ID brings much-needed opportunities for the regional economic integration process in Africa, it also bares the associated risks of cybersecurity, and necessitates the protection and securing of personal data. Countries have undertaken several initiatives aimed at tackling the challenge of managing and controlling digital data as the digital economy expands.

VIII. Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa – its work on matters related to the African Union theme for 2019

43. The Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Management Cluster (Cluster 6) of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa is co-chaired by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs of the Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons Division of the African Union Commission. Working within the Cluster, the African Union has established a Steering Committee involving a broad range of cluster membership, stakeholders and partners for the purposes

of coordinating the implementation of activities related to the 2019 African Union theme of the year. The Committee has supported the development of a concept note and road map for the implementation of the activities.

44. The Cluster has implemented activities and initiatives pertaining to the implementation of the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, including coherence and coordination of humanitarian actions in Africa, the protection of civilians and the cross-cutting issue of integration, from the planning to the implementation stages. Additionally, the Cluster helped to advance efforts aimed at accelerating the ratification and implementation of the Kampala Convention. Work is also being undertaken by the Cluster with the African Union and partners towards the commemoration of activities to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the tenth anniversary of the Kampala Convention.

45. With regard to reducing disaster risk and losses through effective implementation of the programme of action for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 in Africa, the work of the Cluster includes activities aimed at enhancing early warning systems and capacity for early action. In addition, the work addresses the following issues: (a) effective response in the context of the Africa programme of action and Sendai Framework; (b) popularization and implementation of the programme of action in Africa; (c) implementation, monitoring and review of the programme of action and strengthening of the Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction; and (d) the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction.

46. Furthermore, the Mechanism's Cluster 7 – on environment, urbanization and population – supported the implementation of the agenda on climate change of the African Union. Cluster 9, on peace and security, has been carrying out activities in the areas of preventing and mediating conflict and sustaining peace, conflict prevention, the utilization of good offices and mediation, electoral matters and governance, human rights protection and humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the work of all the other clusters of the Mechanism and its four subregional coordination mechanisms touch on the cross-cutting theme. The clusters include:

- (a) Cluster 1, with a focus on trade and regional integration;
- (b) Cluster 3, with a focus on technology;
- (c) Cluster 4, with a focus on migration;
- (d) Cluster 5, with a focus on gender, women and young people;
- (e) Cluster 6, in collaboration with all relevant clusters of the Mechanism, should ensure successful implementation of the road map for the theme of the year of the African Union for 2019.

IX. Conclusions

47. The drivers of forced displacement of refugees and internally displaced persons include conflicts stemming from poverty; political, social and economic inequalities; persecution and other human rights abuses; food insecurity; climate change; and natural disasters. Governments in Africa should deepen structural economic transformation through industrialization and economic diversification in order to create jobs and reduce economic vulnerability and poverty.

48. Continued prudent macroeconomic policies are needed to maintain stability, provide incentives and support the business environment, in order for the private sector to play its role. The “youth bulge” provides the continent with the opportunity to harness the demographic dividend by investing in health, education and skills development of young people. There is also a need to foster

good governance and implement global and regional frameworks on climate change and disaster risk reduction, including the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction. In Africa, the global and continental sustainable development agendas provide robust frameworks to address the drivers.

49. Both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 recognize the principles of inclusiveness and “leaving no one behind”. Sustainable Development Goal 16, on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, embodies that principle in a fundamental way. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals and the associated aspirations contained in Agenda 2063 are relevant to the issue of forced displacement. While humanitarian action is important, it must be linked to development in order to offer sustainable and lasting solutions. More work should be done to understand the displacement-development nexus, and the global and regional frameworks and initiatives leveraged to prevent and mitigate the challenges posed by refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.

Issues for discussion

50. The high-level panels on the theme of the twentieth session of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa may wish to consider the following.

1. Addressing the root causes of refugees and internally displaced persons

51. The drivers of the creation of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa are well documented. They include conflict fuelled by poverty; political, social and economic inequalities between groups; persecution and other human rights abuses; and food insecurity. The situation is exacerbated by climate change, which threatens the already precarious food security of vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons and their host communities across the continent. It is essential to explore how countries – with the support of their development partners and with the involvement of all stakeholders – can address these root causes at the local, national, regional and global levels in a sustainable manner.

2. Upscaling durable solutions, including addressing the forced displacement–development nexus

52. The efforts of member States, the African Union, development actors and humanitarian organizations in coming up with durable solutions to address the situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons are laudable, and appreciable progress has been observed. Given the magnitude of the challenges however, it would be fitting to investigate how the solutions that are currently being applied could be scaled up and out, in order to deepen and widen the support. It would also be worthwhile exploring viable solutions outside the current ones that could be applied to further alleviate the situation. Moreover, the increasing recognition of the forced displacement–development nexus warrants an investigation into solutions that address the nexus, and the role of all relevant stakeholders in their application.

3. Coordinating the work under the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

53. While it is understood that migrants and refugees fall into two distinct categories in terms of drivers and legal instruments governing their treatment, there are commonalities in their circumstances arising from movement from their country or area of origin to destination countries – or areas within the same country, in the case of internally displaced persons. The phenomenon of mixed movements of migrants and refugees is increasingly being observed. Both the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration stem from the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. It is necessary to explore how the two compacts can be implemented

in a coordinated manner that ensures that no one is left behind and that protection gaps are avoided, while simultaneously ensuring that implementation is efficient and effective.

4. Support of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa for the African Year on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons

54. An important objective of the sessions of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa mirror the themes of the African Union is to explore how the Mechanism could support the implementation of the agenda of the continental body on the thematic area. Regarding the present theme, Cluster 6 of the Mechanism, dealing with humanitarian matters and disaster risk management, is expected to take the lead role. Given that the theme is cross-cutting, other clusters will be involved including Cluster 9 on governance, peace and security, and others on economic, social and environmental matters. In that regard, it is important to deliberate on how participating agencies of the Mechanism will rally around the theme, with a view to providing the support required to achieve concrete results in the most efficient manner.
