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**REPORT OF THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES
AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA**

**REPORT TO THE 13TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON
THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS IN AFRICA: FEBRUARY TO JUNE 2008**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report to the 13th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council focuses on the humanitarian situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa. It is a comprehensive report on the general situation of forced population displacement on the African Continent, the emerging trends in population displacement, as well as the initiatives taken by the African Union in addressing the root causes of forced displacement and the follow up on implementation of the previous decisions of the Executive Council on humanitarian issues.

2. It should be recalled that during the 12th Ordinary Session, Council requested the African Union Commission to take various steps in verifying statistics on refugees, returnees and IDPs. Most of the information for this Report was therefore collected from the missions of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, the AU Field Missions, the Conflict Management Center at the AU Headquarters, as well as AU Partners, especially the UNHCR. However, it should be noted that Member States did not respond to the Commission's request to forward information on the humanitarian situation in their respective countries, in particular the figures on refugees, returnees and IDPs. The Report therefore gives an analytical and fact-based approach on the current humanitarian situation in the five regions of the African Union. It highlights the programmes and activities that were undertaken, the major challenges facing Member States and the international community as a whole in tackling the problem of forced displacement and also comes up with concrete recommendations on the way forward in addressing the problem in order to find durable solutions. Finally, a Table on statistics of forced displacement is annexed to this report.

II. REVIEW OF THE GENERAL SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

3. During the reporting period, the general situation of refugees, returnees and IDPs in Africa portrayed some disturbing emerging trends in forced population displacement, including the continued security threats against humanitarian aid workers in the field, the persistence of sexual and gender based violence in refugee and IDP camps, the effects of global climate change and the current food crisis facing the Continent.

4. In June 2006, at the Ministerial Conference on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, AU Member States made a commitment to work towards maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and IDP camps within their territories. The elaboration of a continental policy to this effect is crucial.

5. Additionally, the problem of forced displacement has been further complicated by global climate change and its manifestations into devastating natural disasters, as well as the current global food crisis. In the last year, more than half of the Continent has experienced severe weather conditions such as flooding and drought. The effects have been even more distressing for already displaced and vulnerable populations with little or no access to the basic necessities such as food, shelter, health services and clean water. The result of such intense climatic changes and weather phenomenon has also been linked to the recent food crisis experienced around the world. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), food reserves are at their lowest for 30 years. Africa is among the continents experiencing the worst of this crisis, which is slowly becoming a root cause for conflict in some areas. In a number of countries higher food prices are already causing social unrest, with food riots reported recently in almost all the regions. Africa is still with the largest number of victims of forced displacement in the world with close to 3 million refugees and over 15 million internally displaced persons.

6. On the other hand, however, the Commission is gratified to report that during the period under review, several milestones in returnee statistics were registered in many countries in the central, east and western regions. These recent statistics on returnee populations, coupled with the closure of organized repatriation exercises in countries emerging from conflict less than a decade ago, present hope for the repatriation of tens of thousands of refugees and IDPs in the future as countries of origin create conducive conditions for their return in safety and dignity.

III. REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

A. NORTHERN REGION

7. The northern region continues to serve as host for displaced populations within the Continent and as far as the Middle East. The region is currently host to over 200,000 refugees.

8. **Algeria** is still home to 165,000 Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf camps and the Government continues to provide assistance and protection. This protracted situation of displacement has had significant impact on the social and economic development of the Sahrawi people in the camps, particularly the youth, many of whom were born and have spent their entire lives in the camps.

9. In **Egypt**, the current refugee population is about 37,250 mostly fleeing conflicts in Sudan, Somali and various other countries including the Middle East. In collaboration with the Egyptian Government, the UNHCR continues its operations in the country during the reporting period, with a focus on improving access of the refugees to public health services and education.

B. WESTERN REGION

10. In the western region, the general situation of forced population displacement has continued to improve with the sustained peace and stability of the countries in the

region. Voluntary repatriation exercises for Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone ended in 2007, and the UNHCR is currently running post-voluntary repatriation verification exercises. There still remains hundreds of thousands of refugees around the region who have opted not to return home, and in such cases, the host countries and countries of origin in collaboration with the UNHCR, have been facilitating their integration within the host countries.

11. Concerning **Liberia**, the African Union Liaison Office in the country reported that from February to April 2008, the general humanitarian situation in the country was relatively stable. The Liberian refugees are found in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. During the reporting period, Liberia also suffered from strong winds and flooding, leading to the destruction of properties.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), once the largest peacekeeping mission of the Organization is currently phasing out its operations as the country continues the process of consolidating peace and sustainable development.

12. In the case of **Ghana**, the country continued to give asylum to refugees, the majority being Liberians totaling 26,967 according to the UNHCR. They are mostly in the Buduburam refugee camp, some 35 km west of Accra, the capital. While dealing with the Liberian refugee situation, the country has also continued to assist in the voluntary repatriation of some 3,000 Togolese refugees and the integration of several other nationalities that have opted not to return to their countries of origin.

13. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, it was reported by the AU Liaison Office in the country that though the improved security situation in the country and the signing of the Ouagadougou Accord have given hope for the return of many displaced persons, there still remains between 500,000 and 800,000 internally displaced persons who have not been repatriated because of lack of access to sustainable economic opportunities and social services, as well as inadequate accommodation for the returnees. In recent months, some 2,000 returnees have benefited from the assistance given by the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims (Ministère de la solidarité et des victimes de guerre) and many more from other humanitarian organizations to assist with their settlement. Access to education was also reported as a scarcity in many areas of return, posing a serious threat to the sustainable development of the local communities. In addition to the IDPs, the country also hosts some 24,653 refugees from the region, most of them from Liberia.

14. The situation in **Sierra Leone**, as in the other countries of the region, was very stable during the reporting period. With the closure of the voluntary repatriation programme which saw the return of over 30,000 Liberian refugees between October 2006 and June 2007, the focus of the Government of Sierra Leone and the UNHCR is now on implementing a comprehensive local integration strategy for Liberians remaining in the country, including 12,000 in the camps and 5,000 urban refugees. They are being provided with identification documents and UNHCR assistance in the form of community development programmes.

C. CENTRAL REGION

15. Some improvement in the humanitarian situation was reported in the Central Region since January 2008. However, some of the countries, which were showing signs of improvement experienced some set backs and this has affected the return of their nationals, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, and the Central African Republic. As a result, the countries in the region received new cases of refugees and IDPs.

16. **Burundi** made tremendous progress in welcoming back thousands of refugees, a majority of them from neighbouring countries and also IDPs returning back to their villages. This was as a result of the signing of the peace agreement in 2005 between the Government of Burundi and most of the rebel groups, and a second peace deal with the Forces for National Liberation (FNL), a rebel group in September 2006. In March 2008, the UNHCR reported that the number of returnees to Burundi had reached the 300,000 milestones since repatriation began in 2002. Most of the returnees were voluntarily repatriated from north-western Tanzania, while almost 90,000 returned spontaneously. In spite of the big numbers returning, thousands of Burundians are still refugees and new cases of displacement were reported during the reporting period, due in part to renewed fighting by the FNL in April 2008, thus violating the September 2006 ceasefire accord, which has yet to be implemented.

17. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees undertook an assessment mission to **Cameroon** in May 2008. The Government informed the delegation that it was hosting of a group of about 9,000 new Chadian refugees in the northern region of the country who arrived following the unrest in February 2008 in Chad. At the beginning of the conflict, more than 30,000 refugees were received at the site of Maltam. However, more than 20,000 returned home when the security situation improved especially in N'djamena, the capital. When the mission visited Maltam site, the UNHCR in collaboration with the Government of Cameroon were in the process of relocating the 9,000 Chadian refugees in the new camp of Langui located more than 50 km away from the Chadian border, for security reasons and in conformity with the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

18. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees was further informed that the country was also looking after more than 45,000 refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) who are scattered in several villages in the eastern region. They found refuge in Cameroon because of the insecurity in the northern west part of CAR. The assistance provided to these refugees from CAR is not enough and the UNHCR and WFP informed the mission that they were facing financial constraints in fulfilling all the assistance requirements. There are also some 20,000 urban refugees from different nationalities mainly from the DRC, Republic of Congo, and Rwanda who are living in Yaoundé and Douala.

19. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees also visited **Chad** in May 2008. The Government and various humanitarian organizations briefed the Mission and stated that the country continued to offer protection and assistance to some 250,000 Sudanese refugees in twelve camps and 180,000 Chadian IDPs in the eastern part of the country,

as well as about 60,000 refugees from Central African Republic in four camp sites in the south. There were also 6,000 urban refugees from different nationalities residing in N'djamena.

20. However, there are major challenges such as inadequate access to water and security concerns have impeded the work of some organizations in the field. Increased violence and banditry against aid workers and camps were reported during the period under review. In February 2008 more than 40 aid workers were relocated from Guereda town in eastern Chad, following a series of armed attacks, and a few reported killings including the head of Save the Children who was killed on 1 May 2008. Between October 2005 and March 2008 a total of 82 vehicles were reportedly stolen from humanitarian workers in eastern Chad, prompting the Chadian government, the European Union military operation in Eastern Chad and North Eastern Central African Republic (EUFOR), the UN Mission in Chad and the Central African Republic (MINURCAT) and the international community to collaborate and put in place security measures to address the issue.

21. In the meantime, the country continues to receive massive influxes of refugees from neighbouring CAR and Sudan with inadequate resources to host them. Some of the camps in the east were reported to have reached their maximum capacity, causing UNHCR to build new camps and transfer some refugees. In some cases, such as in Guereda area, around 8,000 of the estimated 13,500 Sudanese refugees who arrived in eastern Chad in February and March 2008 are still camping in the open at Birak, about 70 km east of Guereda close to the border with Sudan. The security situation is therefore very volatile in the country. The Government is deploying efforts, with the support of the international community to maintain political dialogue with the opposition parties in order to attain peace, which will eventually contribute to the return of refugees and IDPs.

22. In **Central African Republic (CAR)**, the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees that visited in June 2008 was informed by Government authorities and other relevant organizations that there were 9,869 refugees with more than half of the number from the Sudan followed by DRC, and Chad. A small number comprise other nationalities. The refugees are primarily being hosted in three camps of Mboko, Sam Ouandja and Molangue while others are in Bangui, the capital. The number of IDPs in the country is about 197,000.

23. The civil war in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, ended in 2003 after the signing of the peace agreement but fighting has continued since then, especially in north and south Kivu, Goma and Katanga provinces. According to the African Union Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the crisis in the country is accentuated by a number of factors including the absence of proper infrastructure and adequate funding to help meet the needs of the populations in need, as well as the insecurity in Kivu province. The humanitarian situation in the country was therefore reported to be grave, with an estimated 400,000 Congolese refugees in neighboring countries, such as Tanzania, which is said to be hosting about 140,000, Rwanda 40,000, Burundi 35,000, and the remaining about 185,000 in Angola, CAR, Republic of Congo, Uganda, and

Zambia. The number of internally displaced Congolese was also reported to be more than 1.3 million, found in the dense forests of North and South Kivu, Ituri, Katanga and Province Orientale provinces, and with the majority being women and children. According to the UNHCR, the majority of the new cases of IDPs have taken shelter in public buildings due to inadequate facilities to house them. The renewed fighting in some parts of the country, especially in Kivu province forced the UNHCR to suspend its humanitarian operations in April 2008. It should be noted that the displacement in the Rutshuru area in Goma came three months after the signing of an accord in Goma between the Government and rival armed groups, which was aimed at bringing peace to the eastern part of the country after more than a decade of conflict.

24. Humanitarian organizations operating on the ground reported that thousands of women and children have experienced different forms of abuses such as beatings, abduction, sexual slavery and rape, and as a result have contracted HIV/AIDS and thousands of them are left with physical and mental scars. Consequently, in April 2008, over 60 non-governmental organizations called for an appointment of a high-level independent special advisor on human rights for eastern DRC in order to address rights abuses and help avoid a return to conflict and also to prevent violation of the 2003 Peace Agreement.

25. The country continues to give asylum to over 300,000 refugees of whom almost 180,000 are protracted cases from Angola, Burundi, and the Sudan. The remaining refugees come from Rwanda, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Uganda.

D. EASTERN REGION

26. **Ethiopia's** refugee population is estimated at 82,770 residing in nine camps, according to the Government's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA). The majority of refugees are from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. While the south Sudanese refugees were returning in thousands, the country continued to receive influxes from Eritrea, the Darfur region of Sudan, as well as some countries from the Great Lakes Region. At the beginning of 2008 more than 4,000 Somali refugees found refuge in the eastern part of the country and as a result, an additional camp was opened to absorb the new arrivals while others settled with relatives.

27. At the time of reporting, tens of thousands of south Sudanese refugees were being voluntarily repatriated or returning on their own. The number of refugees who returned home between February and end of March 2008 was 4,353, thus resulting in the eventual closure of some camps.

28. The table below shows the breakdown of refugees in Ethiopia as at 31 March 2008 according to the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) figures.

Country of Origin	Registered and Assisted Refugees	Camp/Site Location
Eritrea	23,425	Tigray Region, Addis Ababa, Debre Markos and various towns
Somalia	25,601	Somali Region
Sudan	30,117	Gambella Region
Kenya	2,644	Oromia Region
Various Countries	983	Addis Ababa
Total	82,770	

29. During the reporting period **Djibouti** received several asylum seekers and migrants, the majority of them being Somalis. UNHCR reported that over 100 Somalis from Somaliland, in the western part of Somalia entered the country on a daily basis. The number of entries has almost tripled since 2007. Today, Djibouti is host to almost 30,000 refugees mainly from Somalia and Ethiopia.

30. Since January 2008, **Kenya** was mainly concentrating on its IDPs of which the number was over 300,000 after the December 2007 Presidential elections when violence erupted mainly in the Rift Valley provinces. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees visited the country in March 2008 and the authorities informed the Mission that over 500,000 people were affected by the violence whereby 300,000 became homeless or went to find refuge in IDP camps, while others fled to neighboring countries, especially Uganda. The authorities mentioned some of the most affected areas of displacement, which included the slums around Nairobi, Limuru, Naivasha, Nakuru, Eldoret as well as the Burnt Forest settlement in Rift Valley Province. However, at the time of the visit the number of IDPs had considerably reduced to about 137,000. This was attributed to improvements in the security situation in some areas, and some of the farmers were reported to have gone back to tend to their farms since it was planting season. The mission visited IDP camps in Limuru, Naivasha, Nakuru and Eldoret where it was noted that the IDPs were still facing problems of access to basic necessities such as health services, food, warm clothing and proper shelter, particularly given that it was the rainy season.

31. The authorities stated that the most challenging task was to create conducive conditions for the resettlement of the IDPs and reintegrating them back in their communities and villages, or other areas of their own choice while providing them with the necessary assistance, from basic essentials to building houses. In this regard, it was pointed out that some assistance was needed from the international community and the Government set up a National Humanitarian Assistance Fund with an initial sum of one billion Kenyan Shillings in order to provide humanitarian assistance and resettle victims of forced displacement. The African Union was therefore called upon to contribute to this Fund. To this effect, the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees mission recommended that the country be granted some financial assistance to help meet the needs of the IDPs.

32. The authorities also drew the attention of the mission to the document published in March 2008, entitled "Report of the National Accord Implementation Committee on National Reconciliation and Emergency Social and Economic Recovery Strategy". The document will be used to help the Government and other organizations in the restoration of peace and stability in the country, following the post-election violence.

33. While Kenya was taking care of her thousands of IDPs, almost 8,000 Somali new arrivals were settled in the Dadaab camps, which already have a population of 184,000 refugees, the majority being Somalis. The total number of refugees hosted by the country is close to 280,000 from Eritrea, Ethiopia, DRC, Sudan and Uganda.

34. Concerning **Rwanda**, the country continued to receive her nationals back who fled mainly to neighbouring countries. At the same time, in April 2008, the country together with the DRC continued to assess the progress made so far in dealing with the armed groups. A resolution was passed calling on all members of ex-Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR)/Interahamwe and other Rwandan armed groups operating in the eastern part of DRC to surrender immediately to the Congolese authorities and the United Nations peacekeeping mission, MONUC. The refugee population in the country is close to 50,000.

35. Since the last reporting about **Somalia's** humanitarian situation, human rights groups reported that the fighting in April of this year was the worst in more than 17 years. Consequently, large numbers of civilians continued to flee the violence, which was mainly in the capital, Mogadishu. The majority of them found refuge in neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and as far as eastern Sudan, while others joined the already large populations of IDPs, augmenting the figures to over one million. Since January 2008, the Somalis were fleeing at an average rate of 20,000 people a month. The fighting in April 2008 prevented several IDPs from returning to their villages and they are reportedly living in abhorring conditions.

36. Furthermore, the drought in central Somalia has further aggravated the humanitarian situation as many families are in dire need of water and lack of grazing land for their livestock, especially in Mudug and Gaiguduud administrative regions. To make matters worse, the humanitarian organizations were finding it very difficult to assist the affected populations because of persistent insecurity in Somalia.

37. With regards to the **Sudan**, since the beginning of 2008, a hybrid UN-African Union Peacekeeping Force (UNAMID) has been put in place to try to quell the humanitarian suffering and violence in the country. However, the deteriorating security situation in Darfur, due to on-going fighting and the repeated violations of the humanitarian ceasefire which was signed in N'Djamena, Chad in April 2004 have forced thousands of people to either become refugees or IDPs. The people are scattered along the volatile border with Chad. In April 2008, some IDPs were killed in Kalma camp, one of the largest IDP camps in the south of Darfur with a population of 90,000 IDPs.

38. In the meantime, Sudanese from the south of the country continued to return home. The countries of asylum and the government of Sudan in collaboration with the UNCHR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Germany agency GTZ, have repatriated more than 100,000 Sudanese from Ethiopia since 2005 and 5,000 from Kenya since the beginning of this year, while about 59,000 refugees have spontaneously returned from Uganda in the past two years. It has thus brought the total number of returnees to 251,000 of whom 151,000 returned on their own.

39. One of the reasons for the refugees to return was to be counted in the country's census, which was a key part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2003. The exercise will help all concerned parties in the reconstruction of the south in different areas.

40. While the census was being conducted, the Government of Sudan and UNHCR launched a joint registration operation in the eastern part of the country for more than 133,000 mostly Ethiopian and Eritrean protracted cases of refugees who have been living in the country for more than 40 years. The exercise will help to address the plight of these refugees who are still benefiting from humanitarian aid due to unemployment and lack of proper identification documents even as they continue to enjoy the protection of the Government of Sudan. The east of the country received new cases of Somali refugees since January 2008, totalling 1,300.

41. In **Tanzania**, the refugee population continued to decrease as tens of thousands of Burundian and Congolese (DRC) refugees returned home. By March 2008, UNHCR had repatriated over 300,000 refugees from the north-western part of the country and close to 90,000 made the journey back home on their own. As a result, the country is host to about 102,000 Burundian and approximately 96,000 Congolese (DRC) refugees in north-western Tanzania. In the meantime, the Government and UNHCR continued to find lasting solutions for the 218,000 Burundian refugees who have been in the country since 1972 and are living in three self-sufficient settlements and the 2,000 Somali Bantus in Tanga Region.

42. In the case of **Uganda**, UNHCR reported that since January 2008, the country is host to 175,000 refugees of whom 97,600 are Sudanese, 40,000 from the DRC, 18,000 from Rwanda and close to 20,000 from Kenya. As is reported in Ethiopia and Kenya, the number of Sudanese refugees in Uganda dropped because of the on-going repatriation exercise.

43. On the other hand, the country is still gripped with the internally displaced population in the north, as a result of the 20-year conflict which claimed thousands of lives and affected more than 2 million people as well as the infrastructure and basic social services. The number of IDPs still stands at 850,000. The conflict has also contributed to the destabilization of Sudan's southern region and the eastern DRC.

44. During the period under review there were set backs in the peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which would have led to the signing of a peace accord, thus stalling nearly two years of stop-start

negotiations. The failure to sign the peace accord and security concerns have prevented tens of thousands of IDPs from returning to their villages. In the meantime, the LRA continued with its activities of raiding villages, looting, and abducting people, particularly children.

E. SOUTHERN REGION

45. During the reporting period, the Southern region continued to host close to 160,000 refugees who fled from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia.

46. In **Angola**, the UNHCR concluded its four-year voluntary repatriation programme during which over 600,000 Angolan refugees mainly from the region and IDPs were repatriated to their communities and villages. The country's main challenge since 2007 has been on post-conflict reconstruction programmes for the returnees and IDPs.

47. **South Africa** is reportedly one of the countries receiving the largest number of asylum seekers in the Continent, according to the UNHCR. The current number being hosted is estimated to be about 156,570 from neighboring countries as well as some from Burundi, DRC, Somalia and various other countries. Violence against immigrant communities in May 2008 has raised serious concerns for the protection and assistance of refugees in the country. Thousands of refugees and asylum seekers reside in the urban areas. The UNHCR offers assistance to only about 16,000, leaving the bulk of these cases under the primary responsibility of the Government of South Africa. As a result, there has been a major backlog in the registration and application processes.

48. In **Zambia**, the refugee population has slightly gone down from 115,000 to 113,000, with almost half of this number found in four camps in the western, north-western, northern and Luapula provinces while the rest of them reside outside the camps. The majority of refugees are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, with others from Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia. In March 2008, the Government of Zambia, together with the UNHCR embarked on the exercise of updating the refugee figures including individual details.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

49. The Commission of the African Union together with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, and in close co-operation with the AU Partners and various humanitarian agencies implemented some programmes and activities as adopted at the 12th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in January 2008 and in accordance with the work plan of the Commission and Programme of Activities of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees for 2008.

50. The major programmes and activities were:

Missions of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons

51. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons undertook field assessment missions to Cameroon, Chad Central African Republic, and Kenya, between March and June 2008. The main objectives of the missions were to assess the humanitarian situation of victims of forced displacement in the refugee and IDP camps in the various countries, as well as in the areas of return, and during the visits they had an opportunity to listen to the refugees who told them about their plight. The missions therefore met and engaged with Government officials, AU Representatives, the affected populations and aid workers in the field.

52. In the three countries that were visited by the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the problems of security for the welfare of forced displacement were observed and the efforts being made by the Governments to find solutions to the problem of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons noted. They were therefore willing to create conducive conditions for the return of their nationals. However, in the meantime, they needed assistance to support and protect the thousands of victims of forced displacement. In solidarity with the Governments and the people who were suffering, the missions recommended in their reports that the African Union grant a financial contributions to the Governments to meet some of the challenges of looking after the affected forced displacement population.

Meetings

53. The following meetings were held during the reporting period:

- The Bureau of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, met in February 2008, and as one of its main purpose, considered the Programme of Activities for the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees for the year 2008.
- The second meeting of Member States Legal Experts on the draft Convention for the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons to finalize the draft Convention was held from 2 to 6 June 2008 at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was well attended by Member States Legal Experts, Ministries in-charge of forced displacement, Regional Economic Communities as well as AU partners and other relevant organizations. The document will be presented to the Ministers responsible for forced displacement, for consideration in July 2008 before consideration by the Executive Council in early November 2008.
- The Task Force on the Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons met in June 2008 and continued with the preparations of the Special Summit.
- The AU and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) organized the 10th Bi-annual Brainstorming Seminar on International Humanitarian Law

on 27 May 2008. The theme was “Displacement of Populations in Armed Conflicts” in the framework of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The recommendations that emanated from the session would be forwarded to Member States for their follow-up.

World/Africa Refugee Day

54. Under this year’s theme “Protection”, the Commission together with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the UNHCR and its implementing partners commemorated World/Africa Refugee Day, which falls on 20th June, at the AU Headquarters. It was celebrated with a variety of activities including statements from the Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, and the refugees, as well as exhibition put up by the refugees. The Commission also wrote to Member States and urged them to celebrate the occasion by undertaking various activities with a focus on the theme.

Disaster Management

55. The African Union Commission continued to engage in the area of disaster management, given its significant impact on the African Continent. In this regard, the Commission is in the process of recruiting a consultant to elaborate a Continental Framework for Disaster Response and Management, a process that will include relevant AU partners and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Furthermore, the African Union authorised financial contributions to two Member States, Madagascar and Rwanda, amounting to US\$ 75,000 and US\$ 50,000, respectively, to assist them in meeting the needs of their victims.

Cooperation with AU Partners

56. The Commission continued to strengthen its cooperation with AU Partners and various humanitarian agencies, in particular the UNHCR, ICRC, IOM, WFP and AHA according to the existing cooperation agreements. The Division of Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees, and Displaced Persons (HARDP) thus met with the partners in February 2008 to share its programme of work for February to June 2008, and map out areas of collaboration during that period. The partners continued to engage with the Commission on a regular basis concerning their tasks in the preparations of the forthcoming November 2008 Special Summit of African Union Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

57. Furthermore, the UNHCR strengthened the capacity of the HARDP Division by providing human resource support to assist in the preparations for the November 2008 Special Summit.

V. CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

58. Member States continued to give asylum and hospitality to thousands of refugees while countries of origin honored their commitments through the signed agreements and accords which as a result created conducive conditions for the return of tens of thousands of refugees. In spite of the thousands of returnees experienced each year, the African Continent still has the largest number of refugees and IDPs, many in protracted situations of displacement, which are compounded by natural and man-disasters as well as climate change.

Challenges

59. The challenges, which were cited in the last report to the January 2008 Executive Council session, are still valid for Member States and the international community to follow-up. The most pressing ones include:

- Lack of financial support of the donors mainly due to donor fatigue, which as a result has led to the scarcity of funds for many forced displacement programmes;
- The international community continue to ignore the appeals of the countries emerging from conflict to honour their pledges for the implementation of programmes and activities for post-conflict reconstruction;
- Overwhelmed villages and communities with the large influxes of returnees, refugees and IDPs need the attention of the donors in order to avoid destabilization in those areas;
- Rehabilitating the areas impacted by refugees and IDPs during their long stay sometimes for several decades continues to cause serious environmental degradation;
- Frustration of refugees and IDPs who want to return home but are prevented from doing so because of insecurity in the areas of return, presence of landmines or unexploded ordnances (UXO) as well as absence of basic services including infrastructure, health care and education;
- Continued threats on the lives of humanitarian agencies which hamper the delivery of aid coupled with inaccessibility of refugee and IDP camps and other similar areas which need assistance; and
- The relentless problem of illegal and irregular migration in Africa.

The Way forward

60. African Union Member States together with the international community should face the numerous challenges of forced population displacement for the eventual elimination of the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons but should not lose sight of the realities on ground which calls for increased assistance in order to carry out the required programmes and activities for the victims of forced displacement.

61. In order to achieve the desired results with the problem of forced displacement, all concerted efforts are needed by various concerned parties namely; Member States, AU partners and all relevant humanitarian organizations and agencies. It is in this

context that the forthcoming first ever Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons scheduled for November 2008 is very crucial to the welfare of victims of forced displacement and should therefore be attended by all concerned parties. It should be once again recalled that the Summit will not dwell on achievements and statements but rather on mapping out the numerous challenges and how to move forward in the form of recommendations and Solemn Declaration for the eventual elimination of the scourging problem of forced displacement.

**STATISTICS ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS IN AFRICA AS OF MAY 2008**

1. Northern Region

<i>Country of Asylum</i>	<i>No. of Refugees</i>	<i>Countries of Origin</i>	<i>Total No. of Refugees</i>	<i>No. of Returnees</i>	<i>No. of IDPs</i>
Algeria	165,000	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	165,000		
Egypt	19,250	Iraq	37,250		
	11,000	Sudan			
	5,000	Somalia			
	2,000	Various nationalities			

2. Western Region

<i>Country of Asylum</i>	<i>No. of Refugees</i>	<i>Countries of Origin</i>	<i>Total No. of Refugees</i>	<i>No. of Returnees</i>	<i>No. of IDPs</i>
Côte d'Ivoire	24,000	Liberia	24,653	203,000	Between 500,000 to 800,000
	653	Other countries of the region			
Ghana	26,967	Liberia	40,000		
	7,000	Togo			
	6,033				
Guinea	25,426	Various nationalities from the region	25,426		
Liberia	15,000	Côte d'Ivoire	18,030	160,000	
	3,000	Sierra Leone			
	30	Various nationalities			
Nigeria	10,231	Various nationalities from the region	10,000		
Sierra Leone	17,000	Liberia	17,000		

3. Central Region

Country of Asylum	Estimated No. of Refugees	Countries of Origin	Total No. of Refugees	No. of Returnees	No. of IDPs
Burundi	10,500	DRC, Rwanda, various other nationalities	10,500	389,000	
Cameroon	45,000	Central African Republic	74,000		
	9,000	Chad			
	20,000	DRC, Republic of Congo, Rwanda			
Central African Republic	9,869	Sudan, DRC, Chad	9,869		197,000
Chad	250,000	Sudan	316,000		180,000
	60,000	Central African Republic			
	6,000	Various nationalities			
Democratic Republic of Congo	112,680	Angola	180,000		1,317,879
	782	Republic of Congo			
	2,511	Sudan			
	13,905	Uganda			
	50,122	Various nationalities			

4. Eastern Region

Country of Asylum	No. of Refugees	Countries of Origin	Total No. of Refugees	No. of Returnees	No. of IDPs
Djibouti	30,000	Ethiopia, Somalia, various countries	30,000		
Ethiopia	23,425	Eritrea	82,770		
	25,601	Somalia			
	30,117	Sudan			
	2,644	Kenya			
	983	Various nationalities			
Kenya	184,000	Somalia	280,000		137,000
	96,000	Eritrea, Ethiopia, DRC, Sudan, Uganda			
Rwanda	50,000	Ethiopia	50,000		
Somalia	2,310	Various nationalities	2,570		Over 1 million
	260				
Sudan	133,000	Ethiopia, Somalia	133,000	251,000	4.7 million
Tanzania	218,000 (from 1972) + 102,000	Burundi	418,000		
	96,000	DRC			
	2,000	Somalia			
Uganda	97,600	Sudan	175,000		850,000
	40,000	DRC			
	20,000	Kenya			
	18,000	Rwanda			

5. Southern Region

<i>Country of Asylum</i>	<i>No. of Refugees</i>	<i>Countries of Origin</i>	<i>Total No. of Refugees</i>	<i>No. of Returnees</i>	<i>No. of IDPs</i>
Angola				600,000	
South Africa	156,570	Burundi, DRC, Somalia, various nationalities	156,570		
Zambia	55,000	DRC	113,000		
	58,000	Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, various nationalities			

Source: Most of the statistics was collected from: Missions of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons; AU Field Missions; the Conflict Management Center at the AU Headquarters, and AU Partners, especially the UNHCR

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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Thirteenth Ordinary Session
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Sharm-El-Sheikh, EGYPT**

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**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE
ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS**

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE ON
REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS:
FEBRUARY- JUNE 2008**

1. INTRODUCTION

1. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons together with the Commission of the African Union and in collaboration with the AU Partners and various humanitarian agencies implemented some of programmes and activities in accordance with its work plan for 2008.

II. THE MAJOR PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

Missions of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons

2. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons undertook field assessment missions to Cameroon, Chad and Kenya between March and May 2008. The main objectives of the missions were to assess the humanitarian situation of victims of forced displacement in the refugee and IDP camps in the various countries, as well as in the areas of return, and during the visits they had an opportunity to listen to the refugees who told them about their plight. The missions therefore met and engaged with Government officials, AU Representatives, the affected populations and aid workers in the field.

3. In the three countries that were visited by the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the problems of security for the welfare of victims of forced displaced persons were observed and the efforts being made by the Governments and humanitarian agencies to find solutions to the problem of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons were noted. The Governments were therefore willing to create conducive conditions for the return of their nationals. However, in the meantime, they needed assistance to support and protect the thousands of victims of forced displacement. In solidarity with the Governments and the people who were suffering, the missions recommended in their reports that the African Union grant financial contributions to the Governments to meet some of the challenges of looking after the affected forced displacement population.

Meetings

4. On Behalf of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, its Bureau met in February 2008, and as one of its main purpose was to consider the Programme of Activities for the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees for the year 2008.

Furthermore, it met in June 2008 to consider the progress so far made with the various activities.

5. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees participated in the second meeting of Member States Legal Experts on the draft Convention for the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in early June 2008, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was to finalize the draft Convention. The Chairperson of the Sub-Committee chaired the meeting. It was well attended by Member States Legal Experts, Ministries in-charge of forced displacement, and other relevant organizations.

6. As part of the Task Force on the Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons and the Chairperson, Bureau participated in the meetings of the Task Force, which continued with the preparations of the Special Summit.

7. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees fully participated in the joint AU/International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) of the 10th Bi-annual Brainstorming Seminar on International Humanitarian Law on 27 May 2008. The Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees chaired and moderated the Seminar. The theme was “Displacement of Populations in Armed Conflicts” in the framework of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). The recommendations that emanated from the session would be forwarded to Member States for their follow-up.

Commemoration of World/Africa Refugee Day

8. Under this year’s theme “Protection”, the Commission together with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the UNHCR and its implementing partners commemorated World/Africa Refugee Day, which falls on 20th June, at the AU Headquarters. It was celebrated with a variety of activities, which included among others, a statement from the Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees.

Advocacy and Cooperation with AU Partners

9. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees together with the Commission continued to advocate for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in various meetings, conferences and seminars with AU Partners and various humanitarian agencies, in particular the UNHCR, ICRC, IOM, WFP and AHA.

III. CONCLUSION

10. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees will continue to implement its Programme of Activities for the rest of the year 2008 since the Continent is still

gripped with the largest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world and to some extent disasters. The areas to concentrate on are:

- Continue to undertake missions to countries most affected by the problem of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons
- Participate in various conferences, meetings, and seminars on Sensitize of refugee producing countries so that conducive conditions are created for the return of their nationals
- Provide financial assistance to countries most affected by the humanitarian crises
- Monitor programmes of mass voluntary repatriation
- Monitor progress made in the reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons for sustainable development

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