

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

Topic: “Strengthening International Protection and Humanitarian Assistance for Displaced Persons”.

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I. COMMITTEE BACKGROUND

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 by the UN General Assembly. Its primary mission is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless individuals worldwide. UNHCR works to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the ultimate goal of finding durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement in a third country.

II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC

a. Introduction of the topic

Displacement remains one of the most pressing global humanitarian challenges. Forced displacement is driven by armed conflicts, human rights violations, political instability, and environmental crises. According to UNHCR, tens of millions of people are currently displaced across borders or within their own countries. Host communities often face significant pressure on local infrastructure, healthcare, and education systems, making sustained international cooperation essential.

b. Evolution of the topic

Historically, refugee protection focused on providing immediate shelter, food, and medical relief during acute humanitarian emergencies. Over time the response has evolved toward integrated, long-term strategies. Modern frameworks emphasize education, self-reliance, and economic inclusion for displaced populations. Climate change and economic volatility have further complicated displacement patterns, making humanitarian responses increasingly complex.

c. Relevant Events

Global Refugee Forum:

A key platform where governments, civil society, and private sector partners meet to announce commitments and share progress on international burden-sharing frameworks.

Global Compact on Refugees:

Adopted by the UN General Assembly, this framework provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations, and stakeholders to ensure host communities receive predictable, sustained support.

Shift to Safer Havens:

Traditionally a transit country for migrants heading to the United States, UNHCR's Protection Monitoring reports documented that 41% of displaced individuals surveyed now consider Mexico as their final destination to build a life out of reach from localized gang extortions and threats.

UNHCR processes approximately 80,000 asylum applications per year in Mexico, collaborating closely with COMAR (Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance) to digitalize registration systems and provide structural support against criminal encroachment.

III. CURRENT ISSUES

a. Panorama

Humanitarian funding shortfalls continue to pose an existential threat to refugee protection operations globally. Over 117 million individuals remain forcibly displaced due to ongoing armed conflicts, systemic political violence, severe drought, and environmental collapse. The gap between budgeted requirements and actual contributions reached a staggering 63% shortfall in recent budget cycles, leaving millions without basic survival assistance.

Essential services such as clean water distribution, emergency shelter construction, supplementary nutrition, and primary healthcare clinics in major reception zones face severe cutbacks or outright shutdown. Administrative and operational backlogs—exacerbated by strict border controls, reduced processing capacity, and geopolitical polarization—leave millions stuck in prolonged legal limbo without work authorization or formal identity documentation.

b. Points of View

United States of America:

As a historic primary donor to international humanitarian funds, the U.S. continues to provide substantial contributions to UNHCR's core budget while prioritizing regional protection strategies across the Western Hemisphere. American policy focuses heavily on border security infrastructure, improving processing speeds at ports of entry, and investing in regional asylum system capacity-building in transit nations. The executive administration emphasizes deterrence against irregular border crossings alongside legal pathways such as processing centers in Central and South America, sponsorship schemes, and formal refugee quotas.

Mexico:

Positioned as both a major transit corridor and increasingly a primary destination country for displaced populations from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, Mexico advocates for a human-rights-centered regional framework. The Mexican government highlights the heavy burden placed on its national refugee agency and public infrastructure. Mexico demands increased financial support from global funds, greater economic cooperation to address root causes of displacement, and regional solidarity to prevent secondary movements across north America.

Germany:

A major host state in Europe, Germany advocates for a structured, legally binding European burden-sharing mechanism. The German government prioritizes long-term socioeconomic integration programs, including language acquisition, vocational training, and immediate labor market access for recognized refugees. Concurrently, Germany provides extensive flexible funding to UNHCR operations in frontline countries surrounding high-intensity conflict zones like Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine.

IV. UN & EXTERNAL ACTIONS

a. UN

The United Nations plays an essential, non-replaceable role in facilitating high-level diplomatic negotiation, monitoring human rights compliance, and orchestrating humanitarian operations worldwide. Through UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN executes comprehensive emergency responses. This includes setting up emergency reception centers, deploying biometric registration systems to verify identities, running clean water and sanitation (WASH) infrastructure, and distributing direct cash assistance to vulnerable households. Furthermore, the UN General Assembly actively monitors member states' adherence to the 1951 refugee convention and its 1967 Protocol, warning against unlawful pushbacks and the erosion of the principle of non-refoulement.

b. External actions

External actions by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society networks, regional blocs, and private sector alliances are essential to bridging operational gaps left by underfunded UN mandates:

Public-Private Partnerships:

Over 1,500 private corporations and business coalitions collaborate with refugee agencies to create employment opportunities, offer skills training, and facilitate financial inclusion for displaced persons.

Humanitarian Corridors & Resettlement:

Civil society coalitions and faith-based groups coordinate community sponsorship initiatives to secure legal entry, housing, and social integration for refugees arriving in host nations.

Legal Advocacy & Human Rights Monitoring:

Independent international human rights monitoring bodies track border compliance, provide free legal defense during asylum interviews, and challenge arbitrary detention policies through domestic and regional courts.

V. CONCLUSION

Addressing forced displacement demands a comprehensive, sustainable shift from emergency crisis response toward long term resilience, dignified self-reliance, and shared responsibility. Humanitarian relief alone cannot solve the refugee crisis; political will is needed to resolve the root conflicts driving displacement. International burden sharing, predictable financial commitments, and robust local integration strategies remain the essential pillars required to safeguard human dignity, protect basic human rights, and support communities hosting displaced populations worldwide.

VI. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. How can the international community establish flexible and predictable funding channels for underreported displacement crises during severe global budget shortfalls?
2. What concrete policy measures can transit and host nations adopt to balance national border security priorities with legal obligations under international human rights and refugee law?
3. How can international organizations accelerate legal status regularization, work authorization, and socioeconomic inclusion for refugees in developing nations?
4. In what ways can global protection frameworks adapt to address the expanding crisis of climate-induced displacement and cross-border environmental migration?
5. What mechanisms are required to expand public-private partnerships, ensuring that displaced populations gain direct access to education, financial systems, and formal labor markets?

VII. REFERENCES

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