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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

**Office of the United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees**

Section A

Overview of UNHCR and its Mandate

UNHCR Statute

- ◆ The United Nations General Assembly adopted the statute creating UNHCR on December 14, 1950
- ◆ UNHCR had a temporary mandate renewed every five years, however in 2003 the United Nations General Assembly removed the time limitation on the continuation of the Office “until the refugee problem is solved.”

Refugee

1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol

- ◆ A person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”

Expanded Regional Definitions

- ◆ Organization of African Unity (OAU)
 - In 1969 included as reasons for refugee flight “external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order”
- ◆ Cartagena Declaration
 - In 1984 incorporated OAU definition PLUS “massive violation of human rights”

OAU Convention

- ◆ “The term ‘refugee’ shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality”

Cartagena Declaration

- ◆ “Hence the definition or concept of a refugee to be recommended for use in the region is one which, in addition to containing the elements of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, includes among refugees persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety, or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order”

Refugee vs. Immigrant

- ◆ What is the difference?
- ◆ A *refugee* is a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable to or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”

UNHCR Purpose

- ◆ UNHCR was created to
 - Protect refugees
 - Assist refugees
 - Find durable solutions for refugees' problems

Refugee Protection

- ◆ Upholding the principle of non-refoulement
 - States may not return a refugee to a country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened
- ◆ Safeguarding refugees' basic human rights (including economic and social rights) in countries of asylum, and ensuring treatment as near as possible to that of local citizens

Assistance May Include . . .



Food and Water

Medical Care



Photos provided by UNHCR



Shelter

Education



Photos provided by UNHCR

Health

- ◆ Disease/epidemics (water, sanitation, shelter, vaccines)
- ◆ Malnutrition
- ◆ HIV/AIDS, other STDs
- ◆ Maternal and child health
- ◆ Psychological health (effects of trauma and grief resistance to disease)

Durable Solutions

- ◆ Voluntary repatriation
 - Refugees return home in safety and dignity
 - This is the durable solution preferred by most refugees

Durable Solutions

- ◆ Local integration
 - Refugees reach some level of self-sufficiency and remain in their country of first asylum, until repatriation becomes possible

Durable Solutions

- ◆ Resettlement
 - Refugees can neither return to their country of origin nor safely stay in their country of refuge
 - The only solution then is to resettle in a third country

Section B

UNHCR's Work

UNHCR Works with . . .

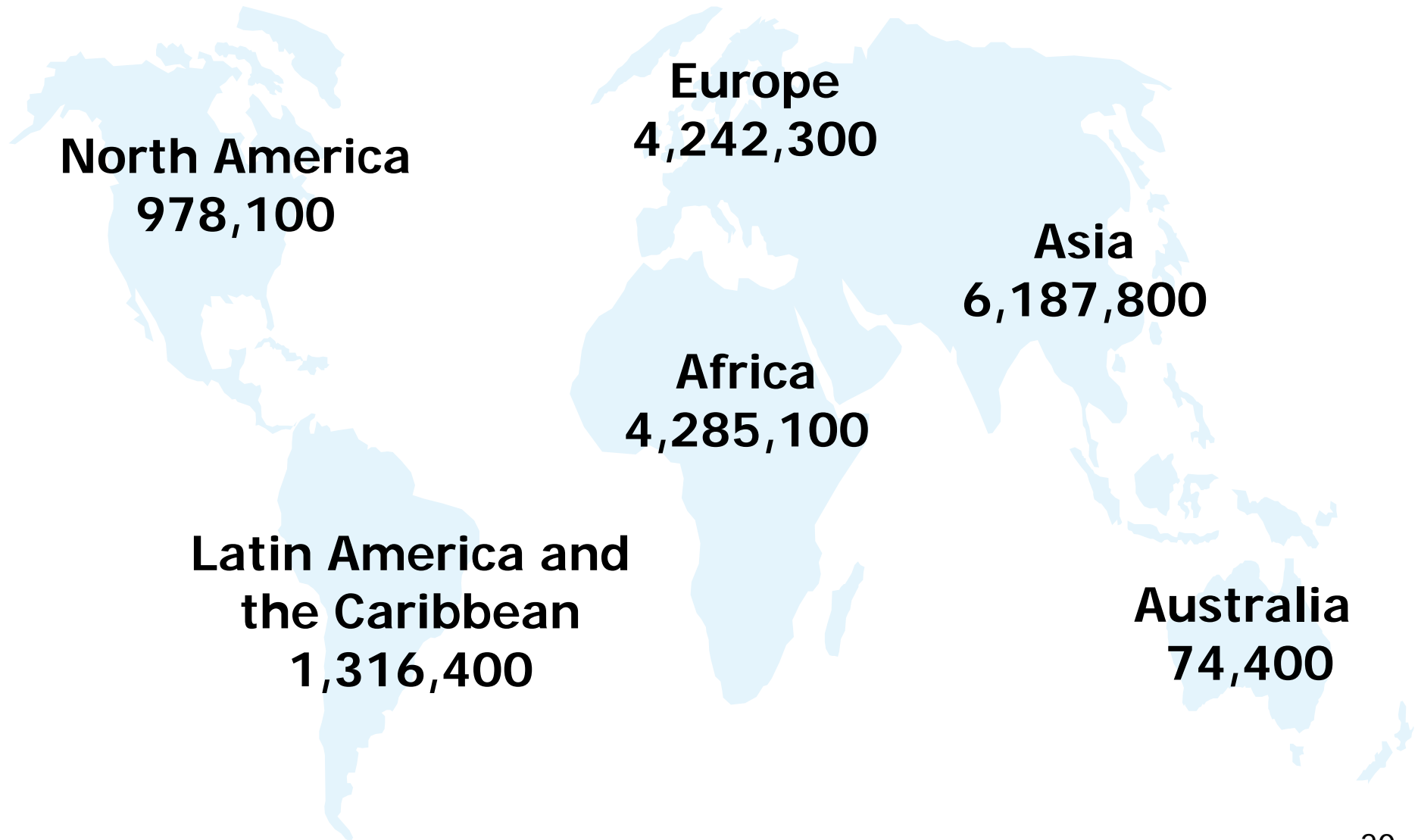
- ◆ Refugees
- ◆ Returnees
- ◆ Some Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- ◆ Some war-affected
- ◆ In some operations, UNHCR may work with all these groups in the same place

Of Concern to UNHCR Today

Worldwide: 17.1 Million People	
Refugees	9.7 Million
Returnees	1.1 Million
Asylum Seekers	985,500
Internally Displaced and Others of Concern	4.4 Million and 912,200

People of Concern to UNHCR

By Region



Changing Humanitarian Circumstances



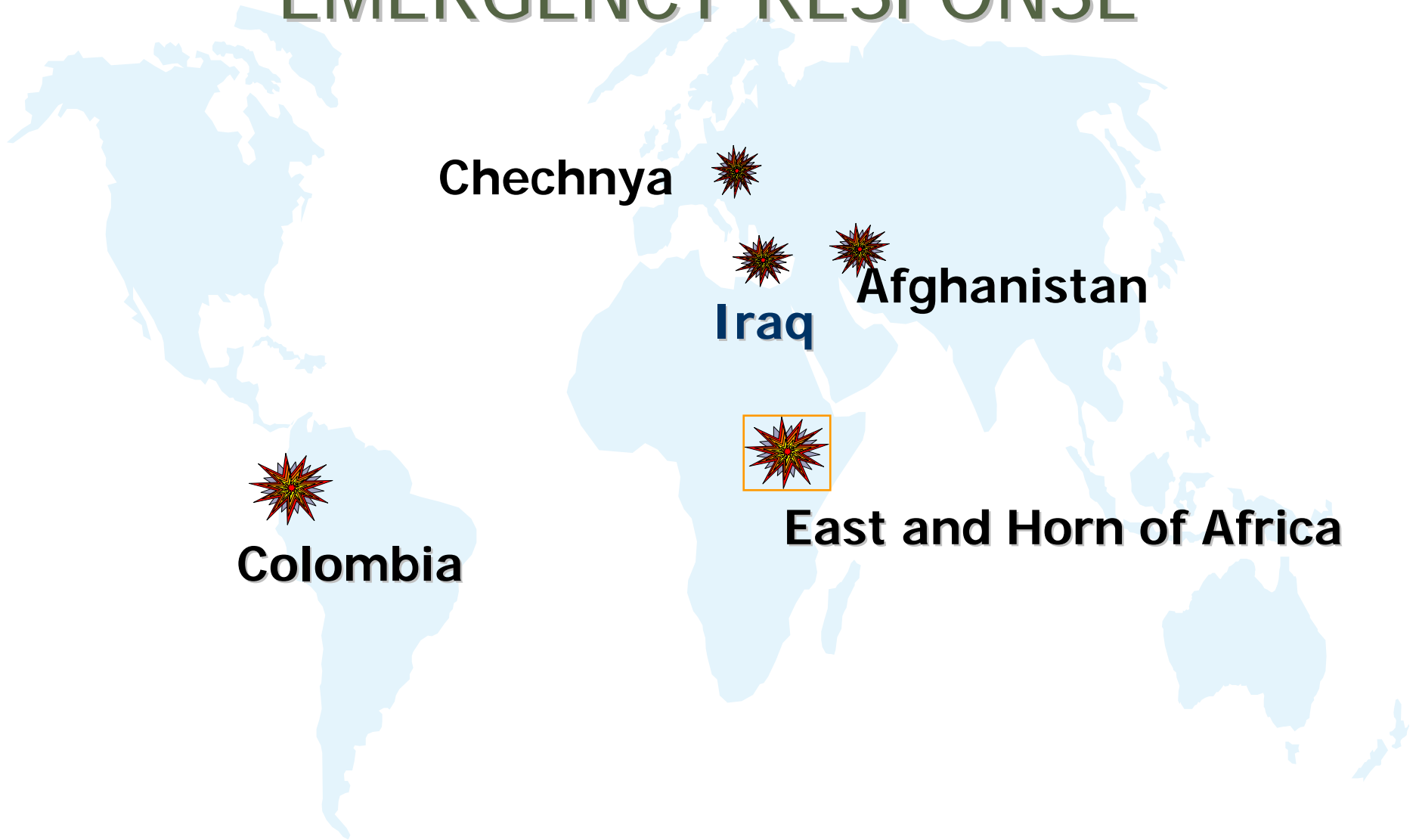
- ◆ More internal conflict
- ◆ Civilians as targets of war/conflicts
- ◆ Insecure, fragile working environment
- ◆ Relief-development gap, even for returnees

Photos provided by UNHCR

Other Challenges/Dilemmas

- ◆ Humanitarian fig leaf—substitute for political will
- ◆ Compassion fatigue
- ◆ CNN factor (+ or -)
- ◆ Working with the military
- ◆ Globalization vs. localization

EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Provided by UNHCR

Origin of Largest Ten Refugee Groups in 2004

Afghanistan	2,136,000
Sudan	606,200
Burundi	531,600
Dem. Rep. Congo	453,400
Palestinians	427,900
Somalia	402,200
Iraq	368,500
Vietnam	363,200
Liberia	353,300
Angola	329,600

An estimated 4 million Palestinians who are covered by a separate mandate of UNRWA are not included in this table

Top 10 Contributors to UNHCR (in millions of US\$) 2004

United States	309	Norway	49
Japan	91	United Kingdom	47
EU Commission	71	Denmark	39
Netherlands	57	Germany	33
Sweden	53	Canada	25

Section C

Afghanistan at a Glance

Afghanistan Refugee Emergency Preparations

- ◆ UNHCR contingency planning
 - Open borders
 - Site identification in Pakistan, Iran, and other countries
 - Emergency teams and relief supplies in place
 - Special appeal to donors

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ Large-scale return of more than 2.5 million refugees and IDPs in 2002
- ◆ 645,767 returned in 2003
- ◆ 375,526 of those returned in 2003 were from Pakistan
- ◆ 269,391 from Iran (2003)
- ◆ 82,000 IDPs (2003)
- ◆ Up to 1 mil refugees anticipated to return in 2004 and another 778,000 in 2005

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ UNHCR will continue to provide transport and cash assistance to returning refugees and IDPs
- ◆ The Ministry for Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) and development actors such as UNDP, FAO, WFP, and ILO will provide leadership in addressing IDP problems

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ UNHCR will maintain a total of 18 offices (two in Kabul) during 2005.
 - 50 international staff and 470 national staff
- ◆ Partnership between UNHCR and Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission will be intensified in 2005.
- ◆ The field presence of UNAMA Human Rights Officers has been increased in 2004 and more strategic interaction with other human rights actors is likely to take place in 2005.

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ UNHCR will monitor the situation of returnees and IDPs and ensure that their rights are protected
- ◆ Facilitate the voluntary return of Afghan refugees with an initial reintegration package including a cash grant, food and non-food items

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ Total UNHCR Budget for 2004: US\$ 1.13 billion
- ◆ Afghanistan's 2005 annual program budget is 64,191,028 USD
- ◆ The 2005 budget for regional activities is another 850,000 USD which includes funds for repatriation of Afghans from various countries, scholarships for refugee students, and comprehensive solutions for displaced Afghans

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ Further reduce its shelter program to 10,000 units in 2005
- ◆ Promote the return of desperately needed professionals, especially doctors and teachers
- ◆ Increase in cash-for-work programs
- ◆ Increase in income-generating activities for women and men

Afghanistan Voluntary Repatriation

- ◆ Recent efforts to foster self-reliance will continue, with the majority of assistance given in the form of food-for-work
- ◆ UNHCR will continue its program to enable the government to take responsibility for protecting and assisting returnees and IDPs

Section D

Conclusion

Funding

- ◆ UNHCR is funded almost entirely through voluntary contributions

Opportunities and Obstacles

- ◆ Current funding climate
- ◆ Need expanding and contracting staff levels
- ◆ Internships (ROW and overseas—see website)

Opportunities and Obstacles

- ◆ Junior Professional Officer Program (two years, U.S. citizens selected by Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration at Dept of State (www.state.gov))
- ◆ UN Volunteers
- ◆ UNHCR partner organizations

Useful Characteristics

- ◆ Masters in related field or law degree
- ◆ Field experience
- ◆ Languages (at least two of six UN languages +)
- ◆ Flexibility, adaptability, cool under pressure
- ◆ Commitment to refugees

For More Information

- ◆ Updates, press releases, refugee law, research issues, program details, and more
- ◆ www.unhcr.ch
- ◆ www.unrefugees.org