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country report

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Indictment on the state of our world – UNHCR's new global trends report

Olaf Wientzek, Sarah Ultes

On 14 June 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) presented its new [global trends report](#). Ten key findings from the report:

- 1. Historic increase in the number people forcibly displaced:** A total of 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2022 - an increase of 21.4% compared to the end of 2021 (89.3 million) and the highest (measured) increase in absolute numbers over the course of a year. Compared to 2013, the number of people fleeing has doubled. This is an indictment on the state of our world, said UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi. An estimated 40% were children (by comparison, children make up 30% of the world's population), 50% were women and girls. The proportion of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remained about the same at 57.7% (62.5 million). 29.4 million were refugees under the UNHCR mandate, in addition to 5.9 million refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 5.4 million were asylum seekers and 5.2 million were in need of international protection¹. 4.4 million people were stateless in 2022. By mid-June 2023, 110 million forcibly displaced people were counted already, mainly due to the fighting in Sudan.
- 2. The main factors for the increase in 2022:** The massive increase in numbers is mainly due

to two developments - the massive refugee movements brought about by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and a correction in the numbers of refugees originating from Afghanistan in Iran and Pakistan. UN High Commissioner Grandi also noted that the UNHCR was increasingly confronted with emergency situations. Unlike in previous years, UNHCR reported situations as (recurring) emergencies 35 times in 2022, rather than just 8-10 times.

- 3. The main countries of origin in 2022:** 52% of the refugees originated from merely three countries: Syria with 6.5 million (18%), Ukraine and Afghanistan with 5.7 million each (16% each)². In the fourth place is Venezuela with just under 5.5 million, followed by South Sudan, Myanmar, DR Congo, Sudan, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. A total of 87% of the people displaced worldwide came from these 10 countries.
- 4. The main hosting countries in 2022:** Türkiye remained the most affected country in absolute terms with almost 3.6 million people (approx. 10%). The order of countries following it however has changed considerably compared to 2021: Iran followed closely with 3.4 million, Colombia with 2.5 million. Germany also recorded a significant increase with 2.1 million (previous year: 1.3) and thus hosts 6%

¹ This category was introduced in mid-2022 and refers to people who are outside of their country or territory of origin because they have been displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories (asylum-seekers, refugees, people in refugee-like situations) but who likely need international protection. It includes Venezuelans who were previously listed separately, but who did not officially apply for

asylum but are in need of international protection under the criteria set out in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration, a regional agreement that is broader in scope than the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees.

² UNHCR refugees and Venezuelans are added together here and below, as such the reference figure is 34.6 million and not only 29.4 million.

of the world's refugees. Pakistan stood at 1.7 million. For the first time, Poland (almost one million) was also among the top 10 host countries. In total, there were 6.6 million refugees in the EU at the end of 2022. Sudan was again among the top 10 countries of origin and reception in 2022, as well as among the top 10 countries with the highest number of IDPs. Calculated per capita, Aruba, Lebanon, Curaçao, Jordan, and Montenegro had the highest share of refugees relative to their national populations in 2022.

5. Regionally different dynamics; unequal distribution remains:

The number of people forced to flee has particularly increased in two regions: in the region "Europe", including Türkiye (+77% compared to the end of 2021, mainly due to Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine) as well as "Asia and the Pacific" (+63%). The Americas have also seen a significant increase (+17%), while the numbers in the other regions (East and Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa) have more or less stagnated. But even within the respective regions, refugees and internally displaced persons were unevenly distributed. For example, 64% of refugees in the Europe & Türkiye region were hosted by four countries only, while in Asia over 90% lived in three countries (Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh) only. Still, the vast majority of refugees (70%) lived in neighbouring countries, 76% in low- and middle-income countries.

6. A complex web of causes:

Ongoing or new wars and conflicts were still considered the main cause of forced displacement. Within just one year, for example, 5.7 million people were displaced as a result of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, making the situation the fastest displacement crisis, and one of the largest, since the Second World War. Beyond conflict, persecution, violence and massive human rights violations, according to figures by the IDMC (International

Displacement Monitoring Centre) figures, 32.6 million people alone have been displaced due to disasters, most of them related to climate change.

7. Asylum seekers:

With 2.6 million new asylum applications, 2022 is considered the year with the highest number of new asylum applications ever recorded. After easing pandemic-related travel restrictions, this represents an increase of 83% compared to the previous year (+31% compared to 2019). About 71% of new asylum applications were registered in just 10 countries. With over 730,000, the USA saw the highest increase, followed by Germany (217,800) and Costa Rica (129,500). Six of the top 10 source countries of asylum applications were in Central or South America (Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, Honduras, Haiti). Worldwide, 5.4 million asylum seekers were still waiting for a decision (+18% compared to last year).

8. Financial burden on too few shoulders:

UNHCR estimates the financial needs for 2023 at 10.8 billion US dollars. Out of this number, only 32% have been covered by June 2023, less than at a similar point in time in previous years. This means that the UNHCR, like other humanitarian organisations (e.g., the ICRC), is sensing greater financial pressure - although not yet to the same dramatic extent. Voluntary contributions by member states currently stand at just over 2.6 billion (some amounts could be carried over from the previous year). As in previous years, the US will remain by far the most important financial supporter (as of June: 38.8% of contributions), followed at a great distance by the European Commission (7%) and Germany (6.6%). Altogether, the EU and its member states currently provide 28.2% of the funding. China, with less than one million for 2023, has for now contributed 1,000 times less than the USA and thus less than Monaco or the Faroe Islands. There are also considerable differences in funding between emergency situations, as Grandi pointed out,

illustrating the example between Ukraine and Sudan.

- 9. Glimmer of hope:** Even though there is a lack of long-term solutions for an increasing number of people, 6 million displaced were able to return to their region or country of origin last year, partly thanks to a peace agreement in northern Ethiopia. With 114,300 people, the number of refugees benefiting from resettlement programmes has also doubled compared to the previous - but this remains only a small fraction of the actual need (7% of 1.5 million).

- 10. Emerging trends in 2023:** Sub-Saharan African countries account for 5 of the 10 largest countries of origin of refugees, and also 5 of the 10 countries with most IDPs. Already now, several countries on the continent are confronted with increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in

2023: In Somalia, for example, more than one million people had to flee in 2023 due to conflicts, floods, and droughts. As a result of the conflict between various armed groups in Sudan, 1.2 million new IDPs had been added by the end of May, and 378,300 had fled to a neighbouring country. Growing numbers of IDPs are being recorded in the DR Congo and in Myanmar as well. The report also looks with concern at the fragile situation in the Sahel region.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e. V.

Dr. Olaf Wientzek
Director Multilateral Dialogue Geneva
European and International Cooperation
Olaf.Wientzek@kas.de



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