



**6<sup>TH</sup> AFRICAN UNION HUMANITARIAN SYMPOSIUM**  
**“Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to  
Forced Displacement in Africa”**

26-30 November 2018, Nairobi, Kenya

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**INTRODUCTION**

The African Union Assembly, at its 31<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session held in Nouakchott, Mauritania on 1-2 July 2018 adopted a decision declaring 2019 as the year of “*Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa.*” The Executive Council and the Assembly requested the AUC to work with the PRC and partner to develop a concept note and implementation roadmap for the theme of the year.

The 6<sup>th</sup> African Union 2018 Annual Humanitarian Symposium will take place on 26-30 November 2018, Nairobi, Kenya. The focus of the Symposium will be to develop the roadmap for the implementation of the theme of the year and brief the AU stakeholders on the efforts by the AU in the implementation and the operationalization of the African Union Humanitarian Agency (AUHA) in order to solicit deeper contribution and feedback.

The thematic focus of this year’s annual symposium is timely. The African continent hosts one of the largest number of displaced persons in the world. Over a third of the world’s forcibly displaced persons are found in Africa, including some 6.3 million refugees and 14.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The region also hosted 509,900 asylum seekers and 712,000 stateless persons. Sometimes these groups are made more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violations of their fundamental human rights in context of volatile migratory movements. Conflicts, natural disasters, the effects of climate change and other factors have left a large number of civilians in need of humanitarian assistance. Too often displaced people find themselves in protracted situations where their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled and durable solutions have become illusory. Increasingly displaced persons are hosted by host communities and located in an increasingly urbanized environment. The particular situation of women and children who constitute more than half of any forcibly displaced population is dire and access to key services considerably limited. While the links between displacement and peace and security is unacknowledged, its development dimension is not fully recognized.

The 2019 theme is being marked at a time where the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States have developed comprehensive and robust legal and policy frameworks governing forced displacement. The Year 2019 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Convention) and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention). Agenda 2063, the African Union Humanitarian Policy Framework and the AU Common Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness have also outlined broader vision for revamping the humanitarian and development architecture through the establishment of the AUHA where there is a high appetite among Member States for its realization which will ultimately be AU's humanitarian operational arm. Several African countries have also embarked on the piloting of the Comprehensive Refugees Response Framework (CRRF) which, at the national level, encouraged policy reforms and implementation of innovative programs targeting both refugee communities and host communities. These national approaches and practices have been instrumental in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees.

The scale of these crises and their protracted nature require the implementation of innovative, comprehensive and robust approaches to tackle root-causes and implement approaches that achieve durable solutions. Building on strong legal, policy and institutional frameworks, political actions and effective and practical programs need to be designed and implemented. Through a combination of activities involving a high-level political summit, thematic roundtables, and comprehensive capacity building package and advocacy, the activities of the Theme 2019 support the achievement of such an overarching objective.

#### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

The Symposium brings together African Union Member States and other stakeholders to support and contribute to the preparation of commemorative activities in connection with the theme of the year 2019. It provides a platform to exchange views and share experiences by participants to contribute to the efforts carried out by the African Union Commission to operationalize the establishment of the African Humanitarian Agency,

The specific objectives of the Symposium include:

- a) Discuss and develop the African Union's roadmap on the Theme of Year 2019;
- b) Share experiences on disaster response and management and humanitarian response mechanisms at the national, regional and international level to inform the process of operationalizing the AUHA;
- c) Establish links between recent global developments in the field of refugees, migration, humanitarian response and development and the work by the African Union to operationalize AUHA.

## FORMAT OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The format of the Symposium will involve:

- a) A panel session on key thematic topics such as participation of affected population, humanitarian and displacement trends, the role of the civil society, national responsibility and action;
- b) Presentations of the policy and legal frameworks at the continental and regional levels;
- c) Panel discussions involving Member States, RECs, international partners and affected population;
- d) Group sessions on the draft roadmap on the Theme of the Year 2019;
- e) Contributions by Member States, RECs and international partners towards the operationalization of the African Union Humanitarian Agency.

## AREAS OF THEMATIC FOCUS

The Symposium will have the following thematic focus:

- a) *Implement and operationalize African Union's strong legal and policy frameworks governing situations of forced displacement and attendant humanitarian crises:* Resources and efforts must be deployed to move forward in the implementation by strengthening the compliance, norm-monitoring and accountability. The Symposium will provide an opportunity to review progress and challenges and share lessons and explore issues that require urgent response including in the context of mixed migration.
- b) *Support to the prevention of forced displacement and finding solutions through robust political action and mobilization in tackling root-causes:* Solutions to conflicts and other causes of displacement and humanitarian crisis is fundamentally a political issue and as such political commitments are prerequisite actions in addressing root-causes and ending conflicts. The Symposium will provide an opportunity by participants to assess ways of effective mobilization of political and peace and security institutions and other actors in supporting solutions strategy and addressing prevention.
- c) *Strengthen measures to address effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters particularly in conflict-affected areas:* Natural disasters and climate change can exacerbate existing tensions among communities, threaten the availability and access to vital resources and affect disproportionately the most vulnerable. The panel will draw on examples of good practices and identify resources, mechanisms and forward-looking strategies backed by national and regional political commitments to prevent and mitigate environmental issues.
- d) *Revitalize and implement a global responsibility-sharing mechanisms to find durable solutions to forced displacement:* Very few refugees and IDPs have access to education and skill-building initiatives critical for building livelihood opportunities. Only one percent of refugees have access to resettlement options. The Global Compact on Refugees incorporates a holistic understanding of responsibility-sharing throughout all aspects of refugee response including maintaining adequate protection and assistance,

finding and promoting predictable, comprehensive and long-term durable solutions. The Symposium will look at specific action at the international, regional and national levels that enables equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing across the humanitarian field.

- e) *Promote and strengthen access to education to refugee and displaced children Africa:* The fulfilment of the human rights of all persons is central to Agenda 2063 and relevant policy frameworks of the Union. The theme of the Year 2019 will highlight how a right-based approach in expanding services particularly education to children which will not only contributes to the development of an effective protection system but also serve as a building block for long term-solution.

#### **OUTCOME**

The Outcome of the Symposium will be a report of the Symposium which articulates the salient elements of the deliberations and recommendations in respect to the theme of the year 2019 and the operationalization of AUHA. A revised roadmap of the Theme 2019 will be developed incorporating the list of activities, implementers and timelines for action.

#### **PARTICIPATION**

The 2018 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Humanitarian Symposium will have participants including Member States of the African Union, RECs, United Nations Agencies, International Non-Governmental Agencies, local civil society organizations, independent experts, NGOs, representatives of affected population, media and others.

#### **VENUE**

The Symposium will be convened at Ole-Sereni Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.