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Items for discussion and decision: refugee statistics**Report of Statistics Norway and the Office of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on
statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons****Note by the Secretary-General**

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2014/219, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons. It provides an overview of international statistics on the three types of forcibly displaced populations: refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. The report comments on legal frameworks, terminology and data sources, and discusses particular challenges in respect of the collection, compilation and publication of data on these populations. These challenges include a lack of consistent terminology, a need for new data sources, and difficulties in comparing international statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons. The report concludes that further work is required regarding statistics on forcibly displaced populations.

The Statistical Commission is invited to discuss this conclusion.

* [E/CN.3/2015/1](#).



Report of Statistics Norway and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons

I. Introduction

1. The number of refugees, asylum seekers and persons who have been internally displaced as a result of armed conflict, war, generalized violence, or human rights violations has increased dramatically in recent years. By the end of 2013, an estimated 51.2 million persons had been forcibly displaced, the highest level in the post-Second World War era. These included 16.7 million refugees, 33.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and close to 1.2 million individuals whose asylum applications had not yet been decided.¹ The growth in the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons was particularly rapid in 2013, and those numbers have continued to increase in 2014.

2. Both internationally and in countries around the world, concern is growing about the availability and quality of statistical information on refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. Important elements in the strategy to improve these statistics will include definitions, classifications, methods, content and quality of information, as well as clarification of data sources.

3. The current inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons in official statistics has resulted in a lack of clarity. As part of their official national statistics, some countries produce tables that include refugees statistics broken down by several characteristics. However, the links between national statistical offices and international organizations that collect or disseminate such statistics remain unclear. In some instances, figures are provided by relevant ministries or directorates of immigration with no clear connection to the official population or migration statistics of the national statistical office.

4. The overarching recommendations on censuses, surveys and international migration statistics cover forcibly displaced persons only partially. They also do not address the particular challenges — technical, operational and political — of collecting and analysing data on these populations.

5. Statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons constitute a sub-group of population and migration statistics. This subgroup has been discussed indirectly in several international forums, but the topic has never been put directly in the agenda of the Statistical Commission as a special item. Migration statistics have been discussed at several sessions of the Commission, most recently in 2014 (see E.CN.3/2014/20), but without a focus on forcibly displaced populations. Moreover, the Commission adopted a set of recommendations on international migration, entitled *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1*, at its twenty-ninth session in 1997 (see E/1997/24, para. 61 (a)). While chapter X of the *Recommendations* contains

¹ UNHCR, “Global Trends 2013: War’s Human Cost”, (Geneva, 2014). Available from www.unhcr.org/5399a14f9.html. Figures do not include disaster-induced displacement. It has been estimated that 22.4 million persons were newly displaced by disasters in 2013. See www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures.

recommendations on asylum statistics, it says very little about refugees and other categories of forcibly displaced populations.

6. It is clear that statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons need to be improved. Crucial for such action will be a set of recommendations that both countries and international organizations can use to improve data-collection methods, reporting, data disaggregation and overall quality. Recommendations emanating from the Statistical Commission would offer benefits to both international and national actors in charge of statistical data collection and distribution, in terms of accuracy and compatibility of statistical data. Ultimately, these benefits would impact on the lives of vulnerable population groups.

7. For official statistics, it is important to achieve coherence and consistency, which means that population statistics need to take into account forcibly displaced populations in a consistent way. The challenges may differ, though, between source and receiving countries or, in the case of I internally displaced persons, between areas within a country. Any actions undertaken to improve statistics will need to deal directly with these concerns. In addition, it is important to build a global system of statistics with internationally consistent estimates of the number of forcibly displaced populations.

II. Evaluation of the present situation and need for action

8. Statistics on forcibly displaced persons are collected and published every year by countries and international organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Eurostat and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Other national and international organizations, as well as academic institutions, undertake some related activities. However, there are a number of challenges associated with current statistics, which will require improvement in the volume, quality and timeliness of data on forcibly displaced populations (as discussed below). In this process, the following goals (the list is not exhaustive, however) may need to be achieved:

- Consistency of terminology
- Explanations of terminology and definitions, as well as guidance on systematic operationalization of those definitions
- Comparable internationally published statistics on refugees and other forcibly displaced populations
- Data collection related to forcibly displaced populations
- The need both to improve existing data-collection methodologies and to develop new ones, applicable in situations of forced displacement

III. Definitions

9. The term “refugee” is defined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (article 1). The Convention was amended by the 1967 Protocol thereto, which removed limitations on the application of the Convention in terms of both time and place (i.e., events were no longer restricted to those occurring before

1 January 1951 or in Europe). According to the Convention and the Protocol thereto, a refugee is someone 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 nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. Some 150 countries are signatories to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol thereto.

10. According to UNHCR, for statistical purposes, refugees include individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol thereto or the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. For these purposes, refugees also include those recognized in accordance with the statute of UNHCR, individuals granted complementary forms of protection² or those enjoying temporary protection.³ The refugee population also includes individuals in a refugee-like situation.⁴ However, neither the 1951 Convention nor UNHCR statistics cover persons fleeing from natural disasters or environmental changes.

11. The basis for the statistical activities of UNHCR is its statute, which states, in paragraph 8 of chapter II, entitled “Functions of the High Commissioner”, that “(t)he High Commissioner shall provide for the protection of refugees falling under the competence of his Office” by, inter alia, “obtaining from Governments information concerning the number and condition of refugees in their territories”. The competence of UNHCR is mirrored by the treaty obligation of States parties to the 1951 Convention and/or the 1967 Protocol thereto, which, in article 35 (2), stipulates that the “contracting States should undertake to provide the Office of the High Commissioner “in the appropriate form with information and statistical data requested”. For more than 60 years, countries have been providing information to UNHCR concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories.

12. The mandate of UNHCR does not cover Palestine refugees in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, the West Bank or Gaza. The total number of registered refugees and other registered persons in these areas as of 1 January 2014 was more than 5.4 million.⁵ Rather, these populations come under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),⁶ which was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out relief and related programmes for

² Complementary protection is protection provided under national, regional or international law to persons who do not qualify for protection under refugee law instruments but are in need of international protection because they are at risk of serious harm. This category includes subsidiary protection, a status defined in article 2 (g) of Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011.

³ Temporary protection comprises arrangements developed to offer protection of a temporary nature, either until the situation in the country of origin improves and allows for a safe and dignified return or until individual refugee or complementary protection status determination can be carried out.

⁴ This term is descriptive in nature and refers, inter alia, to groups of persons who are outside their country or territory of origin and who face protection risks similar to those faced by refugees but for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained.

⁵ According to paragraph 7 (c) of the UNHCR statute, the competence of the High Commissioner “does not extend to a person who continues to receive from other organs or agencies of the United Nations protection or assistance”.

⁶ www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014_01_uif_-_english.pdf.

Palestine refugees. However, Palestine refugees in Egypt, Iraq and other countries do fall under the UNHCR mandate, and thus are included in the statistics of the Office of the High Commissioner.

13. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has repeatedly renewed the mandate of UNRWA, extending it most recently until 30 June 2017.⁷ UNRWA defines Palestine refugees as “persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict”. The descendants of Palestinian refugee males, including adopted children, are also eligible for registration. UNRWA regularly produces statistics on Palestine refugees.

14. Under national asylum laws, a person who has applied for asylum or refugee status but whose claim has not yet been determined is generally considered to be an asylum seeker.⁸ Unless refugees are recognized on a prima facie basis, a refugee needs to go through an asylum procedure, during which his or her refugee status is determined.⁹ States bear the prime responsibility for determining eligibility for refugee status. However, in countries where national asylum procedures are not in place or where States are unable or unwilling to assess asylum claims in a fair or efficient manner, UNHCR may conduct refugee status determination under its mandate.¹⁰ Statistical information on asylum seekers is important because, even though not all asylum seekers are recognized as refugees, such data show the number of persons who left their country of origin and have sought protection in another country.

15. The other large group of forcibly displaced populations consists of internally displaced persons. In the absence of an international treaty on such persons, the following definition (see [E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2](#), annex, para. 2) has found wide acceptance among the United Nations as well as States: “(i)nternally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.”

16. While refugees and internally displaced persons share the fate of forcible displacement, the main difference between them is that refugees are outside their country of origin, i.e., they must have crossed an international border. Internally displaced persons do not have a special status in international law with rights specific to their situation, as they legally remain under the protection of the State in which they reside. Moreover, the definition of “internally displaced persons” is broader, in that it applies to natural or human-made disasters. Without an exclusive mandate for the protection of internally displaced persons, in most cases UNHCR does not produce its own statistics on such persons.

⁷ See www.unrwa.org/who-we-are.

⁸ See popstats.unhcr.org.

⁹ Other than under national laws, i.e., under international refugee law, recognition as a refugee is granted on a declaratory basis, inasmuch as the material conditions of refugee status will have been met beforehand.

¹⁰ See UNHCR, *Statistical Yearbook 2012*. Available from www.unhcr.org/52a723299.html.

17. A stateless person is defined under article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons as “a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law”. In other words, stateless persons do not possess the nationality of any State. UNHCR statistics refer to persons who fall under this definition, though data from some countries may also include persons of undetermined nationality.¹¹ UNHCR estimates that at least 10 million persons are stateless globally, though official statistics cover only some 3.5 million. The majority of the world’s stateless populations have not been forcibly displaced. However, stateless refugees are included in UNHCR refugee statistics.¹²

IV. Data sources

18. Data on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are collected by countries, international organizations such as UNHCR and UNRWA, and national and international non-governmental organizations. There are many challenges associated with collecting these data, including with regard to relevant metadata (terminology and definitions). In some cases, the data may be politically sensitive. In this regard, data protection and privacy are important but also present a challenge, since data may also be used for political purposes, e.g., to demonstrate that a situation has been resolved or that it still requires resolution. The situation in countries affected by conflict or war, often including neighbouring countries, may present particular challenges with regard to methodology, quality of data, access to displaced persons (due to insecurity), coverage, timeliness, costs and comparability over time and among countries.

19. Different data sources provide different perspectives on forced displacement. Some sources are appropriate for assessing stocks, such as registration and censuses for refugee and internally displaced persons, while immigration authorities or population tracking systems are usually better able to provide data on flows. Sometimes, attempts are made to estimate stocks from data on flows: for example, the number of refugees in a country may be estimated based on the number of refugee arrivals during preceding years. However, this method has shortcomings, which can be overcome only if data on births, deaths, immigration, emigration and naturalizations of refugees are also used. Unfortunately, such data are often unavailable or difficult to obtain.

20. Nevertheless, substantial amounts of data are collected and disseminated every year. The main data sources and methods for the generation of statistics on forcibly displaced populations include the following:

- Registration of refugees and internally displaced persons
- Profiling of internally displaced persons
- Tracking of population movement
- Population censuses
- Surveys

¹¹ See www.unhcr.org/5399a/14f9.html.

¹² A detailed discussion on the complexity of enumerating stateless populations is beyond the scope of the present report.

- Border crossings
- Vital events registration
- Administrative records and registers
- General population registers
- A variety of estimation methods for producing statistics when adequate and reliable data on individuals are deficient or unavailable

21. By the end of 2013, individual refugee registration was the source of about 67 per cent of the data on refugees falling under the UNHCR mandate; estimation accounted for 16 per cent of data, combined estimation and registration for 7 per cent and other sources for 10 per cent.

A. Registration of refugees and asylum seekers

22. Refugees and asylum seekers are best protected when they are registered individually. Objectives include establishing legal status or recognition to enable the identification of their need for international protection. During registration, information covering name, sex, date of birth, country of origin, marital status, and place of displacement is collected and updated. Refugee statistics are generally based on government registration records. In cases where the government is unable to register refugees or asylum seekers, UNHCR may assist or undertake registration activities. UNRWA maintains the records of all registered individuals who fit the legal definition of “Palestine refugee”.

23. At the end of 2013, registration was the main method of collecting data on refugees in 114 countries. The vast majority of refugees residing in camps have been registered on an individual basis. However, with more than half of the world’s refugees residing in urban or semi-urban locations, individual registration poses particular challenges. For instance, some refugees may not register owing to either a lack of awareness of the need to do so, or a perception that the risks of registration outweigh its benefits. In addition, individuals in mixed migration flows (e.g., refugees, asylum seekers and migrants) may be in need of international protection but nonetheless choose not to apply for asylum from fear of declaring themselves to the authorities.

24. Although refugees are often registered individually, the accuracy of registration varies greatly, depending on the protection and operational environment. In a refugee register, all persons are included and records are updated regularly. However, as pressures to register outweigh those to deregister, data from a refugee register may be overreported, which would require periodic corrective action through, for instance, a verification of records. In mass refugee situations and when populations are highly mobile, maintaining a refugee register becomes a serious challenge. UNHCR has improved and streamlined registration standards by introducing a dedicated registration system.

B. Registration of internally displaced persons

25. Registration of internally displaced persons is utilized mostly by individual organizations, particularly UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration.

In some cases, though, Governments also facilitate the identification of specific vulnerabilities, the management of individual cases, and the distribution of assistance. While registration data are often used for estimating the number of internally displaced persons in camp and camp-like settings, such data will present an incomplete picture. In many contexts, the majority of internally displaced persons reside outside camps — on their own or with family or friends, often in urban locations — where they are neither registered nor counted. Given the distinct legal frameworks and political contexts within which actors responding to different forced displacement situations function, registration is not as common a source of statistics on internally displaced persons as it is of statistics on refugees.

26. Registration of internally displaced persons is greatly impacted by the Government's willingness to acknowledge the situation of internally displaced persons and to enable the humanitarian community to respond. Registration does not capture all internally displaced persons, and once the registration process has taken place, the criteria for deregistration become a critical issue. Often, deregistration signifies not a durable solution but rather the end of State or international support. Registration is also conducted in varying ways: for instance, families may be registered rather than individuals, or the population of families of internally displaced persons may be calculated based on a national determination of "family size", even though such a determination can differ among organizations.

C. Profiling of internally displaced persons

27. Collection of data on internally displaced persons is sometimes carried out through a process known as profiling. This approach aims at providing an overview of displacement-affected populations through the collection and analysis of core data (the number of internally displaced persons, as disaggregated by location, age, sex and diversity) and other kinds of quantitative and qualitative data. This process thereby enables the consideration of such issues as the causes and patterns of displacement, protection concerns, humanitarian needs, and prospects for durable solutions. Profiling utilizes a range of methodologies, often combining population estimation methods and sample-based surveys targeted specifically at forcibly displaced populations, frequently in order to compare their condition with that of the local or host population.¹³

D. Tracking of population movement

28. In situations where the movement of forcibly displaced populations is fluid or continuous, a movement tracking system can be a useful tool for providing rough estimates of population flows, including recurrent displacements. Such a system is often more suitable for remotely monitored or inaccessible areas, as well as situations where the intensity of population movements is relatively large. On the other hand, a movement tracking system is not particularly appropriate for providing estimates of total population and its composition if the data quality is highly dependent on available information sources. UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and other organizations have developed methods for

¹³ See www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2008/guidance-on-profiling-internally-displaced-persons.

tracking movements of internally displaced persons in over 30 countries, particularly in cases of disaster-induced displacement, but also in cases of displacement that is conflict-induced.

E. Population censuses

29. The most comprehensive source of population data in most countries is the population census. A census is better suited to measuring stocks rather than flows, e.g., through questions on country (or place) of birth. If the year of immigration is also recorded, rough migration flows into or within the country (or region) can be estimated.¹⁴ If this information is then combined with responses to questions related to causes of migration (including persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations), the number of refugees or internally displaced persons can be estimated.

30. However, it is not common practice in a census to ask questions related to forced displacement. Moreover, this is not classified as a core topic in international census recommendations, and there is no clear recommendation on the inclusion of a question on purpose of migration in population censuses. This limitation was clearly reflected in the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses, in which such questions were included only on a limited scale.

F. Sample surveys

31. Sample surveys are a useful source of detailed information on the characteristics and situations of forcibly displaced populations. These surveys can be particularly useful if they are conducted in a standardized and systematic manner, and if they cover a large number of countries affected by forced displacement. Compared with censuses (and administrative registers), sample surveys can go into far greater depth and ask many more questions. Surveys can be particularly useful in the effort to properly identify forcibly displaced populations based on individuals' and households' self-reported migration history, including patterns and causes.

32. Several standardized international sample surveys have been designed for special purposes. These include the Living Standards Measurement Study surveys, the Labour Force Surveys, the Demographic and Health Surveys, and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. The advantage of these surveys is that they both cover a wide range of countries and are conducted in a regular or systematic manner. These surveys could also be used to study forcibly displaced populations, albeit with some amendments.

33. The Mediterranean Household International Migration Survey (MED-HIMS) offers an interesting example of how to combine refugees and asylum seekers with other dimensions of migration in a representative survey. These surveys, supported by several international organizations and implemented by national statistical offices in the Middle East and Northern Africa, provide representative multilevel, retrospective and comparative data on the characteristics and behaviour of migrants

¹⁴ See, for instance, Economic Commission for Europe and United Nations Population Fund, "Statistics on international migration: a practical guide for countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia" (Geneva, 2011). Available from www.unecp.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/International_Migration_Practical_Guide_ENG.pdf.

as well as the consequences of international migration. The Mediterranean Household International Migration Survey includes a module on refugees.

G. Border crossings

34. The registration of persons crossing international borders is conducted in many countries. In some, data on border crossings are used to estimate migration flows. Identifying refugees among these crossings remains a significant challenge, however, particularly if individuals decide not to apply for asylum or refugee status even if they may be clearly in need of international protection. There are many problems associated with such data, including those discussed directly below:

- Distinguishing migrants from other persons crossing a border, such as tourists, commuters, traders and truck drivers, is very difficult
- Many border posts are not equipped to handle large migration flows, and officials may not be properly trained to handle those flows
- Emigration from a country is registered with less diligence than immigration into that country. This is both because emigration usually does not have serious implications for a country and because there are usually no legal constraints on emigration, as there are for immigration
- Few borders are tightly closed and there are many illegal (or undocumented) border crossings

H. Vital events registration

35. Migration and internal movements, unlike births and deaths, are usually not considered vital events. However, there is increasing interest in registering migration. Still, doing so is far more difficult because movements in a population are usually more frequent than births and deaths. Moreover, people usually have few incentives to register a move. Further, internal moves in a country are typically harder to record or register than instances of immigration and emigration. Given these challenges, it is difficult to rely on vital registration statistics to establish accurate data on forcibly displaced populations.

I. Administrative records and registers

36. Many countries have administrative records or registers of immigrants that may be used to produce statistics on the stock of refugees in that country. Statistics on residence permits issued to refugees or asylum seekers are a particularly interesting tool in this regard, and this applies to both flow and stock figures. Eurostat, for instance, collects and disseminates statistics on residence permits of persons enjoying refugee status and subsidiary protection.

J. General population registers

37. One special type of administrative register, often called a central population register (CPR), covers the total population. In a growing number of countries,

information from the central population register is the main source of migration statistics. In general, central population registers do not contain information on the reasons for migration, although in some countries, the national statistical office can link data from the central population register to those from the immigration authorities. This facilitates the identification of refugees and asylum seekers, provided that these groups have been coded separately.

38. A system with this type of information is among the best sources of data on the number of refugees in a country. Nevertheless, even this type of system may not necessarily provide an estimate of the number of refugees that is consistent with the definition in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as explained below. It is challenging and costly to establish and maintain a comprehensive population register, and to use it to produce statistics. Only a few countries (particularly in Northern Europe) have set up such a register, although there is growing interest in setting up such registers in many parts of the world. Such a system also opens up opportunities for more elaborate analysis of the integration of refugees in host countries, as the data can be linked to administrative registers on, for instance, labour and education.

V. Collection and dissemination of statistics on forcibly displaced populations

39. Individual countries bear the responsibility for collecting data on refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons, with UNHCR being the global disseminator of this information.¹⁵ The Office of the High Commissioner maintains a statistical online database with data on country of residence and origin, including demographics and locations of these populations. Currently, data are available for the period 2000-2013, and this publicly available database can be used to construct special tables on demand.¹⁶ Further, UNHCR has annual data on refugee flows and stocks dating back to 1951, the year the Office of the High Commissioner was created, and is currently working on making these historical data available online. The UNdata portal (data.un.org), maintained by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations contains refugee data starting from 1975. UNHCR regularly publishes statistical reports, in particular *Global Trends*,¹⁷ “Mid-year trends”,¹⁸ *Asylum trends*,¹⁹ and the *Statistical Yearbook*.²⁰

40. UNHCR continues to lead in the collection of refugee-related data, although the number of countries where UNHCR provides such information exclusively declined from 76 in 2010 to 63 (37 per cent) in 2013. Meanwhile, the proportion of countries where refugee data were exclusively provided by Governments gradually increased over the same period from 33 to 36 per cent. In 2013, the proportion of countries where data were provided exclusively through collection conducted jointly by States and UNHCR was 15 per cent, while in the remaining proportion (12 per

¹⁵ See www.unhcr.org/statistics.

¹⁶ See popstats.unhcr.org.

¹⁷ See, for example, www.unhcr.org/5399a14f9.html.

¹⁸ See, for example, www.unhcr.org/52af08d26.html

¹⁹ See, for example, www.unhcr.org/5423f9699.html

²⁰ See www.unhcr.org/pages/4a02afce6.html.

cent), refugee data were provided exclusively by non-governmental and other organizations. In 2013, more than 185 countries and territories provided data on refugees.

41. Further, Eurostat publishes statistics on refugees based on residence permits issued in the European Union.²¹ Countries and national and international non-governmental organizations also provide this information, based on sources of varying type, which in turn offer varying degrees of completeness, quality and timeliness. In view of the limited resources and capacity of some States to collect refugee data, UNHCR and its partners provide requisite resources and technical assistance for data collection. Yet, there are sometimes substantial inconsistencies between the numbers published for the same country, including high-income countries with good statistical systems. These inconsistencies are usually due to differences in definitions, times and statistical methods, including the mixing of flow and stock data.

42. Countries with good population registers are likely to have the best data on refugees and asylum seekers. Norway, for example, has had a central population register for 50 years. All non-Nordic immigrants to Norway have to apply for a residence permit or register their reason for moving to Norway. Statistics are published annually on the number of resettled refugees and asylum seekers, including recognized and rejected asylum applications. Nevertheless, there are substantial differences between the numbers published by Norway and those of international organizations. At the end of 2013, the number of refugees in Norway was 46,033 according to UNHCR, 18,734 according to Eurostat and 132,203 according to Statistics Norway.

43. These differences (as noted above) are partly explained by the methodologies and definitions used. The UNHCR estimate is based on the total number of asylum seekers who were granted a positive decision on their asylum claim over the past 10 years.²² The Eurostat estimate is based on valid residence permits issued to those granted refugee status or subsidiary protection. The Statistics Norway estimate, on the other hand, is based on the number of “principal applicants” — 179,534 when including persons who have been given a residence permit owing to a family relationship with refugees. The refugee statistics for Norway are based on data on all immigrants to Norway, i.e., data since 1990 on the first reason for immigrating to Norway, data since the early 1980s in Norway’s refugee register, and for earlier years, imputations based on year of immigration and country of birth.

44. Although there are many challenges associated with collecting reliable statistics on refugees, collecting data on internally displaced persons is substantially more challenging. The major reasons for this include lack of national policies and laws on internal displacement in most countries, differences from country to country with regard to definitions and methods for identifying and counting internally displaced persons (e.g., limiting recognition to a specific period, place or cause of displacement), fluidity of population movements, the issue of securing physical access to internally displaced persons, security concerns, and political priorities. Moreover, it is often difficult to differentiate internally displaced persons from persons who have moved within a country for reasons related, for example, to work,

²¹ See http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database.

²² This methodology also applies to a number of other high-income countries. UNHCR is currently reviewing this approach.

family, housing or education. In addition, the fact that some persons may have been forcibly displaced within their country multiple times, poses additional challenges with respect to establishing estimates, particularly if no mechanism is in place to correct statistically for such movements.

45. Statistics on internally displaced persons are collected and disseminated by Governments and a multiplicity of national and international actors, including UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and the International Organization for Migration. The statistics of UNHCR on internally displaced persons are limited to countries (numbering 24 in 2013) where the organization is engaged with such populations.

46. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement.²³ It monitors and analyses the internal displacements caused by conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, and natural hazard-induced disasters, and is currently covering about 160 countries. The Centre uses a wide range of secondary sources of information, including national Governments, the United Nations and other international organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, human rights organizations and the media, as well as mathematical models. The availability and reliability of data vary widely from country to country, however, as these depend on national authorities' capacity and will to collect and disseminate such information. Disaggregated data showing the location and size of groups of internally displaced persons, as well as their breakdown by age and sex, are available in only a few countries.

47. Another challenge associated with available statistics on internally displaced persons stems from the fact that they usually refer to cumulative estimates in respect of individuals or households that have been displaced. Recognition of when displacement ends is not easy to operationalize nor is monitoring easy in this regard; further, identification of individuals who have achieved a durable solution remains a challenge.²⁴

48. The Joint IDP Profiling Service is an inter-agency service that supports international and national actors in collecting data on displacement situations through collaborative data-collection exercises. In particular, the Service aims at addressing gaps in disaggregated data (by location, sex, age and diversity) and promoting evidence-based responses to displacement in the context of the search for durable solutions.²⁵

²³ See www.internal-displacement.org.

²⁴ According to the "Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons" (Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, April 2010), a durable solution is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement. Available from www.unhcr.org/50f94cd49.pdf.

²⁵ See www.jips.org.

VI. Evidence and current statistics

49. Statistics on forcibly displaced populations are dependent on definitions of statistical units and populations. In addition, definition of variables and classifications are crucial. For refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and returned refugees, 26 the following statistics are of interest:²⁶

- Time trends
- Distribution by age, sex and family status (including, e.g., unaccompanied children)
- Ethnicity
- Location (e.g., camp or other, urban or rural, region)
- Time since fleeing and since resettlement
- Country and region of origin
- Country and region of resettlement
- Naturalized refugees (acquisition of citizenship)²⁷
- Return or relocation of refugees or internally displaced persons
- Local integration of refugees or internally displaced persons
- Living conditions (including, e.g., housing, water, food, water, health)
- Human rights situation (e.g., violence in general, gender-based violence, civil rights)
- Integration of refugees and internally displaced persons (e.g., health status, educational activity and attainment, services, labour-force participation, language skills)

50. For many of these topics, both stocks and flows are of interest, with different challenges associated with the production of statistics. Some of these, especially the last three, are more difficult to measure than others.

51. The data to be collected, analysed and disseminated depend on the actual situation and the needs of the institutions requesting the information. The data required for emergency assistance, for instance, may be very different from those needed for general monitoring, long-term development or the achievement of solutions with respect to displacement (such as return or resettlement). Some examples of such types of statistics are presented below.

52. The flows of forcibly displaced persons change from year to year in response to disasters, conflicts and other threatening situations. In general, the number of refugees declined from the highs following the Second World War to 2 million-4 million during the 1950s and 1960s (not including Palestine refugees under the UNWRA mandate). Starting at the end of the 1970s, the number increased again,

²⁶ Returned refugees (returnees) are former refugees who have returned to their country of origin, either spontaneously or in an organized fashion, but have yet to be fully integrated. Such returns would normally occur only under conditions of safety and dignity.

²⁷ Refugee status ends as a result of acquisition of new nationality, pursuant to article 1, sect. C, para. 3, of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

peaking at 18 million in 1992, and eventually declined, to about 10 million. However, in recent years, the number of refugees began to grow again and had reached 11.7 million by the end of 2013.

53. Based on measurement at the end of 2013, more than half (53 per cent) of all refugees under the UNHCR mandate came from just three countries, Afghanistan (2.56 million), the Syrian Arab Republic (2.47 million) and Somalia (1.12 million).²⁸ Developing countries hosted 86 per cent of the world's refugees, in particular Pakistan (1.6 million), the Islamic Republic of Iran (857,400), Lebanon (856,500) and Jordan (641,900), compared, for example, with the United States of America (264,000, based on a UNHCR estimate), France (233,000) and Germany (188,000).

54. By the end of 2013, about one third of all refugees under the UNHCR mandate were living in camps and collective centres. Slightly less than half (47 per cent) lived in individual accommodations, mostly in urban areas. The type of accommodation was unknown or unclear for almost one fifth (19 per cent).

55. Also by the end of 2013, UNRWA had registered some 5 million Palestine refugees. These were residing in Jordan (2 million), the Gaza Strip (1.2 million), the West Bank (754,000), the Syrian Arab Republic (517,000) and Lebanon (447,000).²⁹

56. The times series available for internally displaced persons whose displacement was due to conflict or war is much shorter than for refugees. Data are on offer only from 1989, when the number was estimated at 16.5 million worldwide. After substantial fluctuations during the 1990s, the number of internally displaced persons increased markedly according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, reaching 33.3 million at the end of 2013, the highest figure on record.³⁰ Two thirds of all internally displaced persons monitored and reported by the Monitoring Centre are from just five countries affected by conflict: Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

57. About 8.2 million individuals were newly internally displaced in 2013, representing an increase of 24 per cent compared with the figure for 2012. In addition, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that 22 million people were newly displaced during the course of 2013 as a result of disasters triggered by both weather- and geophysical hazard-related events, such as floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and wildfires.

VII. The way forward

58. There is much to be gained from improved international coordination centred around statistics on forcibly displaced populations, which would enable a high-quality standard for official statistics to be obtained. Particularly important in this regard will be cooperation between national statistical offices and international organizations. While the latter are expected to continue to lead the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics on refugees and internally displaced

²⁸ See www.unhcr.org/5399a14f9.html.

²⁹ See www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014_01_uif_-_english.pdf.

³⁰ See www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures.

persons, greater involvement of national statistical offices in some of these activities would be to the benefit of all.

59. This report has highlighted the challenges that diverse actors face with regard to measuring the magnitude of forcibly displaced populations, including some of the characteristics unique to this process. Consideration of this report at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission will assist national statistical offices as well as international statistical organizations in improving their understanding of such challenges. The Commission is invited to discuss the following observations:

- Currently, there is no forum or event that can facilitate discussion centred around statistics on forcibly displaced populations. An international conference or seminar, aimed at evaluating the state of the art in respect of these statistics, would be useful in this regard. Such a conference would bring together experts from international and non-governmental organizations, academia, and national statistical offices, and would serve three purposes.
- First, such a conference would bring together the principal actors working in this domain and thereby allow them to outline the critical challenges to establishing credible, reliable and accurate statistics on refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. Discussion would be particularly important on the availability and quality of national versus international data sources, as well as methodological challenges (related, e.g., to sampling, including the lack of a sampling frame in many situations).
- Second, such a conference would identify those challenges requiring especially urgent action and then prioritize them for follow-up. Third, such a gathering would be able to explore the issue of where statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons might be best incorporated within a national statistical system. Norway and UNHCR would take the lead in organizing the conference, with the exact date and venue to be determined. Its conclusions, including an overview of proposed actions, would be submitted to the Statistical Commission in 2016 or 2017.
- In addition, the statistical community needs international recommendations on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons, similar to the *International Recommendations on Migration Statistics*. These could be developed by a group of experts from both international organizations and national statistical offices who are working in this area.
- There is also a need for a handbook or a statistical standard for application to situations of forced displacement, including the possible development of generic modules for collecting data on refugees and internally displaced persons through population censuses, surveys or other instruments.
- More analysis and research are required in domains such as the measurement of refugee integration, including the development of relevant indicators.
- Improved cooperation between national statistical offices and international organizations centred around forced displacement should be envisaged and strengthened.
- Finally, technical assistance should be provided by international organizations and national experts with a view to enhancing the capacity of countries to collect data on forcibly displaced populations. Such assistance would involve

both national statistical offices and ministries that collect statistics on these populations.

VIII. Points for discussion

60. **The Statistical Commission is invited to discuss and approve the suggested way forward as described in section VII above, in particular as regards:**

- **The organization of a conference on statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons, which would bring together international organizations, experts from national statistical offices, and the research community**
 - **Based on the outcome of the international conference, how the Statistical Commission can contribute to the formulation of better international recommendations for statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons. The reporting back to the Statistical Commission by the organizers, at either its forty-seventh or forty-eighth session, on concrete next steps and priorities.**
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