



PRESS RELEASE

UNHCR has built a new house but now needs to learn to live in it

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Geneva – With an uptick in global displacement, the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the world’s leading refugee agency, is more critical than ever. Mandated to deliver protection, assistance and solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced and stateless people – in more than 130 countries around the world, the UN agency operates in an increasingly complicated environment. Doing this well requires the right business model to be fit for purpose for the evolving global and local challenges UNHCR, its partners and the people they serve face amidst the crises of today and those of tomorrow.

The 2024 MOPAN assessment of UNHCR – released today by the Multilateral Performance Network (MOPAN) in Geneva, championed by the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Switzerland – looks closely at UNHCR’s business model. On the heels of December’s Second Global Refugee Forum, the report focuses on the organisation’s progress since the last MOPAN assessment conducted five years ago and the areas where the organisation needs to further its change process—working even more closely and transparently with its donors, partners and stakeholders.

Suzanne Steensen, Head of the MOPAN Secretariat, echoed the importance of UNHCR’s position in the multilateral system, at today’s launch stating, “If UNHCR is to live up to its potential and deliver on its mandate to provide protection, response and solutions in today’s complex geopolitical environment, it must have the right business model”.

For an organisation with such a critical role to play in the humanitarian space, UNHCR has honoured its mandate and protection focus in a turbulent global landscape. Partners applaud the organisation for its impressive emergency response mechanisms and clear leadership in refugee situations and internal displacement situations, reinforced by strong global advocacy for forcibly displaced and stateless people.

In response to the previous MOPAN assessment conducted in 2017-18, which found a need for greater organisational cohesion and a more agile operating model for UNHCR, the 2024 assessment finds the organisation transformed. UNHCR has undergone a root to branch change process which has set it up to deliver results efficiently and effectively in the midst of increasingly protracted conflicts and worsening global challenges like climate change - together driving displacement and human suffering to unprecedented levels. In response, the UNHCR of today has an organisational structure that allows flexibility and agility in decision making, supported by clear and accessible policies.

In addition, UNHCR has made ground-breaking strides in thwarting sexual misconduct – a priority for MOPAN members.

However, despite good progress in most areas, UNHCR could do more to strengthen its relationship with donors and partners. Many of the organisation’s external stakeholders, note



that UNHCR could further strengthen consultation and transparency with its governing structure, ExCom. UNHCR also needs to become a less demanding and more reasonable funding partner.

Finally, UNHCR's new business model aims to enable a longer-term mindset into an organisation that is increasingly dealing with protracted crises; but these adjustments have not yet translated into a multi-year way of working. In addition, the organisation is aware of the need to work towards including refugees in national services and supporting them to become economically active and self-sufficient, but despite significant efforts, has not yet found a systematic way of handing over responsibility to national governments and development actors.

The Multilateral Performance Network (MOPAN) is an independent network of 22 member states who have a shared vision to promote an effective multilateral system trusted to deliver solutions to evolving global goals and local challenges. Together, MOPAN members and collaborators provide over USD 70 billion in annual contributions to and through the multilateral system – the majority of the system's official development assistance.

For further information on MOPAN, or about this MOPAN Assessment of UNHCR, please contact: Cara.YAKUSH@mopanonline.org