

*In Global Report to Security Council...*

## UNHCR Describes Increasingly Complex Challenges

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres briefed the Security Council in early January on the challenges facing his agency in caring for tens of millions of uprooted people in an increasingly complex and often dangerous international environment, noting that since his last appearance in 2006, when refugee numbers were the lowest in nearly 25 years, there has been

a significant increase in displacement—primarily due to the conflicts in Iraq and Somalia.

Today, UNHCR works in nearly 120 countries on behalf of some 32 million refugees, internally displaced people and others of concern. More than 80 percent of its 6,000 staff work in the field, 60 percent of them in difficult and often dangerous non-family duty sta-

tions. Guterres listed a series of conflicts worldwide that have generated millions of refugees and presented enormous humanitarian challenges.

One group of high-profile crises—stretching from south and south-west Asia, through the Middle East to Sudan, Chad and the Horn of Africa—accounts for about two-thirds of the world’s refugees and includes Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan’s Darfur region and Somalia.

These conflicts were now interrelated and together are having major implications for global peace and security. They require a strong humanitarian response, Guterres said, but any lasting solution must be political. “While it is absolutely vital that the victims of armed conflict be provided with essential protection and assistance, we must also acknowledge the limitations of humanitarian action and its inability to resolve deep-rooted conflicts within and between states,” he said.

In Afghanistan, intensified conflict and the deliberate targeting of aid workers has restricted humanitarian access to around half of the country, Guterres said. Nevertheless, Afghan refugees continue to go home with UNHCR support—some 278,000 last year alone, mainly from Pakistan. Most of them, however, were returning not because of a meaningful improvement in Afghanistan, but because

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## Hillary Clinton Assumes Leadership at DOS



An excited staff overflows the lobby of the Department of State to greet Hillary Clinton as she arrives for her first day in new post. DOS Photo by Michael Gross

**R**esponding to an enthusiastic welcome by more than 1,000 foreign service and civilian employees as she arrived for her first day on the job as the nation’s 67th secretary of state on January 22, Hillary Clinton pledged her best efforts to establish a new era in American diplomacy.

Describing defense, diplomacy and development as the three vital legs on the stool of American foreign policy, she said that she would work with the staff “to make it abundantly clear that robust diplomacy and effective development are the best long-term tools for securing

America’s future.”

To resounding applause, she urged the staff “to think outside the proverbial box” and provide her the best advice possible.

“I want you to understand there is nothing that I welcome more than a good debate and the kind of dialogue that will make us better.”

Pausing to let the applause subside, she added: “Now not everybody’s ideas will make it into policy, but we will be better because we have heard from you.”

Later that day, President Barack Obama accompanied Vice President

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*In My Opinion...****Preserving the Glow of Celebration***

**B**efore the glow of celebration and unity generated by Barack Obama's inauguration as president of the United States is dimmed too darkly by the renewed partisanship and bickering that is likely to accompany his efforts to deal with the awesome challenges he has inherited, let me share with you some reflections about its impact in America and around the world. As the events unfolded, I was reminded of how the confluence of his inauguration with the annual observance of the Martin Luther King holiday and the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth were infusing the inauguration with a special measure of meaning and significance.

For those who struggled so long and courageously with Dr. King to overcome the nation's history and practice of racial discrimination, the inauguration was interpreted as a fulfillment of King's dream. With television coverage including a replay of his famous speech on the Mall in 1963 on ABC—and frequent excerpts on other networks—the nation was reminded of how dramatic has been the change in such a relatively short time. Interviews with former King associates Congressman John Lewis and Jesse Jackson revealed the depth of emotion and fulfillment they were experiencing.



**Tsehaye Teferra, Ph.D.**

As the networks cut from the archived scenes of the crowd that had attended the King-led March on Washington to live coverage of the masses assembling for the Obama inauguration, I was struck by the enormous diversity of the crowd—both in race and age—and the spirit of patriotism, community and hope that seemed to prevail everywhere. By urging the nation to make the King holiday a time of public service, in which both he and the First Lady participated—Obama seemed to be reigniting the passions that accompanied John F. Kennedy's election and the launch of the Peace Corps.

The impact that President Lincoln's life and leadership is having on Obama was evident throughout his campaign, in the pre-inaugural events, the ceremony itself and in his initial cabinet and staff appointments. Often noted during the campaign were the similarities they share: common roots in Illinois, personal gifts of eloquence, composition and oratory; both authors of best-selling books; and both perceived as lacking adequate experience to become president. Obama emulated Lincoln's arrival in the nation's capital with his train ride from Philadelphia, took the oath of office using the same Bible as used by Lincoln, and chose as the theme of his inauguration a phrase from Lincoln's Gettysburg address: "A New Birth of Freedom."

What may prove to have a more meaningful impact on Obama's administration than the symbols of shared legacies is the appropriation of Lincoln's attitude and actions in senior level appointments. As documented in Presidential Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin's book "Team of Rivals," which Obama said he was reading during the campaign, Lincoln valued competence over ideology and selected former arch rivals to become partners in his government. By choosing Hilary Clinton as his new Secretary of State, Obama is validating his stated opinion that Lincoln was "a very wise man." With her pledge to select "effective and creative professionals" to fill key position at DOS, Clinton is committed to following that example.

As noted in my letter of congratulation to President Obama, I interpreted the outpouring of celebration and sense of hope demonstrated by those who observed the inauguration in Africa and around the globe as an affirmation of his messages of hope and commitment, sacrifice and service, freedom and peace.

## UNHCR Global Report Urges Political Actions To Deal With Refugees

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of growing insecurity and economic hardship in Pakistan.

Pakistan has itself now seen the displacement of some 300,000 of its own citizens in North West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas along the Afghan border. This underscores the fact that the Afghan situation cannot be addressed in isolation, which is why UNHCR and the Kabul government recently organized an international conference to consolidate a comprehensive strategy for the sustainable return and reintegration of the country's uprooted people.

In Iraq, UNHCR is also working with the government to create the necessary conditions for the eventual voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of refugees and internally displaced people, Guterres said, adding that there was still a long way to go before this groundwork was done.

In addition to these high-profile, inter-related situations, Guterres said there were many other conflicts that largely lack international attention because their impact is local or at best regional, and they are not seen as having implications for global security. These include crises in places such as the Central African Republic, where some 300,000 people have been uprooted, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

"To echo my earlier remarks, there is no humanitarian solution to that conflict," he said of the DRC, where UNHCR and other agencies are struggling to help hundreds of thousands of displaced people amid continuing violence and massive human rights abuses. "The solution must be political and involve the DRC, Rwanda, other regional actors and the international community as a whole."

Guterres noted that the forms of forced displacement were also becoming more complex and interrelated, exacerbated by a mix of climate change, extreme poverty, poor governance and conflict, and now possibly compounded by

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## African Diaspora Celebrates Obama, Promotes Global Change

By Ralph Dannheisser

Special Correspondent, *America.gov*

African immigrants and the children of African immigrants celebrated the new presidency of Barack Obama for the positive change they believe it will bring to the United States and their home countries.

African Diaspora for Change, a group originally formed to campaign

for Obama but now transformed into a nonpartisan organization, held an unofficial inaugural ball January 18. The ball, held at Washington's new Harman Center for the Arts, combined African-style entertainment, speeches and fundraising for education projects at home and abroad.

The event's theme, "I Am the Change," borrowed a phrase from the

rhetoric of Obama, the son of a Kenyan father and American mother, who was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States two days later.

Many of African Diaspora for Change's members—including Eritreans, Ethiopians, Ivoirians, Somalis, Kenyans and Sudanese—worked to accomplish this change, knocking on more than 13,000 doors and hosting get-out-the-vote parties on behalf of Obama.

The inaugural ball, which emphasized education, served as a fundraising event for the Batonga Foundation, an organization that supports secondary school and higher education for African girls, and First Book, which distributes new books to children in low-income communities throughout the United States and Canada.

Grammy Award-winning Beninese singer-songwriter Angelique Kidjo served both as entertainer and motivator—belting out songs before the audience of 500 and speaking in her role as Batonga's founder.

Kidjo, a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, explained that batonga is a word she invented when she was taunted while attending school at a time when education for girls was not acceptable. She defined it to mean "Get off my back. I will do what I want, I will be who I want."

"The only thing that can lead Africa toward democracy and economic sustainability is education, particularly of girls still held back by gender discrimination," Kidjo said. "Education can keep girls out of early marriage and early motherhood that limit their options."

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A percussion group entertains the audience at the African Diaspora for Change inaugural ball.

Courtesy Photo by Jati Lindsay

### Clinton Assumes Leadership at DOS, Names Envoys

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Joe Biden, former Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell and former U.N. ambassador Richard Holbrooke on a visit to the Department's ornate Ben Franklin room in what Clinton identified as a further indication of the administration's commitment to effective diplomacy.

She announced the appointment of Mitchell as a special envoy for Middle Eastern affairs and Holbrooke for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

For those engaged in refugee affairs, Clinton's testimony in confirmation hearings before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee offered encouragement about improved funding and policy initiatives.

Responding to a question by Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) about how she planned to deal with refugee issues, Clin-

ton said: "I will do my very best to elevate this issue, to give you the kind of expertise within the State Department that will give you comfort that we're going to make this a high priority and to come up with solutions to some of our longstanding refugee challenges."

Describing refugee issues as extremely complex and fueled by conflicts, famine, disease and poverty, Clinton said she would pursue a comprehensive strategy to deal with refugees who have been confined in camps for many years and those experiencing more recent dislocations.

For the senior staff assembled in the Ben Franklin room, President Obama evoked a response akin to that which greeted Clinton in the entrance lobby earlier in the day when he said: "I've given you an early gift: Hillary Clinton."

### UNHCR Report Highlights Staff Safety Needs

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the impact on the developing world of the current global financial meltdown and economic recession.

The High Commissioner also cited some specific security challenges facing his agency and the international community in responding to humanitarian crises, starting with peace-keeping and protecting civilians in situations where there is no peace to keep.

"As a humanitarian agency, UNHCR has limited capacity to provide physical security for its beneficiaries," he said. "In some situations, ensuring the security of camps and maintaining their civilian and humanitarian character is only possible with the support of peacekeepers."

In eastern Chad, an effective peace-keeping force was crucial in dissuading attacks on refugees, in preventing recruit-

ment of refugee children by armed groups and in reducing the threat of banditry and sexual violence.

"But in situations where there is no peace to keep, mandates for the protection of civilians must be sufficiently clear and strong, and supported by appropriate levels of political and material support," Guterres said.

"Ensuring staff safety must be a top priority of every humanitarian organization and the UN as a whole. That is non-negotiable," Guterres said. "And yet, with the evolving nature of armed conflict, the deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers has increased, establishing a tension between the imperatives of staff safety and effective humanitarian action. This is an issue which continues to generate acute dilemmas."

## Kenyans Celebrate New American President as 'One of Their Own'

By Thomas J. Dowling

**O**n the evening of January 20, Kenyans celebrated the inauguration of their new president. Barack Obama was actually being sworn in as the president of the United States, but you never would



**Celebrating President Obama as one of their own, Kenyans watch inauguration ceremonies at an event organized by Thomas Dowling of the American embassy in Nairobi.**

know it from the cheering that erupted in impromptu gatherings throughout the country, including at a gathering of 400 students, teachers, artists and journalists who watched the proceedings at the residence of the U.S. Embassy's public affairs officer.

For the last week, the imminent accession of Kenya's favorite—if somewhat removed—son to the most visible office in the world had become *the* news again and, despite some rather interesting local scandals, the only topic on people's lips for days.

Virtually every footstep of Obama's journey to Washington and events that occurred once he ar-

rived were followed avidly, with days of commentary from young and old alike.

Via the seeming magic of big-screen televisions, the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi managed to add another 400 excited participants to the throngs gathered on the National Mall on January 20. More than 200 students from 10 secondary schools and nine universities joined another 200 education, cultural and civil society contacts in cheering as President Obama took the oath of office and then mentioned in his inaugural address the small village where his father was born.

President Obama's pointed references to dealing with the realities of the economic crisis in the United States and his calls for restoring America's standing in the world were not lost on the Kenyans. In conversation after conversation, Kenyans old and young alike wondered how they could raise new political leaders like "our president."

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## African Diaspora Celebrates Obama, Promotes Global Change

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"Barack Obama has proven to the world that you can have dreams and hopes and achieve them if you are educated and you have the determination ... and that it has nothing to do with your skin color," she said.

Octavia Jackson, senior vice president of First Book, announced plans to send 10,000 books to Batonga girls in 2009 as the program expands overseas.

Jackson said programs like First Book are vital because 80 percent of U.S. pre-schools and after-care programs serving disadvantaged children "have not a single book for the children they serve," she said. "We'd like to bring the spirit of this inauguration to a global level because I know that together we can create the change that is necessary" both in the United States and Africa.

Baroness Valerie Amos, a native of Guyana who rose to be leader of the British House of Lords, termed Obama's election "truly transformational in a remarkable sense."

"Just in case you thought that you in the United States were the only ones who

were excited by what's happening here," she told the audience, the occasion was "historic for the whole world."

"What we hope to see is a resurgent United States, a truly positive global voice, playing a positive role around the world," and Obama is "not just your president, he's our president," she declared.

Witney Schneidman, a deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs in the Clinton administration who advised the Obama campaign on African issues, lauded what he described as the campaign's unprecedented effort to involve the African diaspora community.

"You've never really been part of the political dialogue for a presidential candidate, and we were going to change that," he said. "We wanted the Somali community in Minnesota to go out and mobilize, we wanted Ethiopians in Virginia to go out and deliver the vote, we reached out to Nigerians, Congolese, Senegalese, South Africans all across the country, and they responded, and it was extraordinary."

"When it comes time [for the Obama administration] to implement policy, the

African diaspora community is going to have a very important role. ... This administration is going to need your help to achieve whatever we're going to be able to achieve in Africa," Schneidman said.

Representative Donald Payne, a Democrat from New Jersey and chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health and a senior member of the Congressional Black Caucus, served as honorary chairman of the event.

Recounting the long history of the civil rights movement, he stressed that more remains to be done. "If there is a youngster not getting a decent education in this country or a policeman who is brutalizing a citizen or a person who is losing their home or looking for a job, the job is not done. You must continue to push forward," he declared.

Amina Salum Ali, the African Union's envoy to the United States, said Obama's election signaled "a new dawn in the political landscape of the United States." Ali encapsulated the spirit of the evening when she closed her talk by leading rousing cheers of "Oyay, America," "Oyay, Africa," and then—loudest of all—"Oyay Obama!"

## Resettled Congolese Refugee Inspires International Aid Lifeline

In 1998, four years after the Rwandan genocide claimed the lives of nearly one million ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, the Rwandan Tutsi army invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), triggering another



**Academy Award winner Susan Sarandon serves as an advisor to Mapendo International and recently described Rose Mapendo's work on CNN's "Celebrities and Their Heroes."**

### Kenyans Celebrate Obama...

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In electronic programming, media commentary and personal reactions, Kenyans spoke as one as they focused on how the points of the inaugural address that defined the specific ills America faces and will overcome reflected the economic and political turmoil in Kenya. They wondered where the spirit of Americans—from its founders through its immigrants to its newly awakened youth—could be found among Kenyans to deal with the country's constitutional reforms and anti-corruption issues.

"Where," they asked wistfully, "were the Kenyan Obamas who could break the chains of tribalism and party politics and the culture of impunity, and institute a regime of law?"

The embassy's inauguration program was the culmination of the programs run to educate Kenyans about the U.S. electoral process. It now serves as the starting point for a new embassy speakers program on peaceful political transition, the realization of the American ideals of equality and the rule of law embodied in the U.S. Constitution and brought to fulfillment through the American civil rights movement.

wave of violence against Congolese Tutsis. Rose Mapendo and her husband, both Tutsis, were living with their seven children in the eastern DRC when the campaign against Tutsis began. She went through a terrifying ordeal and flight before being offered a new home in the United States, where she has become an inspiring advocate of peace and support for refugees as an Ambassador for Mapendo International, an organization named in her honor and founded by Sasha Chanoff, a former cultural orientation instructor with the International Organization for Migration in Nairobi Kenya. (Sasha was a program participant at ECDC's 2002 national conference.) Rose now lives in Phoenix, Arizona, and spoke recently with UNHCR's Senior Public Information Officer Tim Irwin in Washington. Here are excerpts from the interview:

**As a result of the anti-Tutsi violence, you and your family were arrested in 1998. What happened?**

*The government sent policemen to my house. They were looking for my husband. After they left, I told my husband to go into hiding. I knew the situation was dangerous for men, but I didn't realize it would also be dangerous for women and children. Some time later, the military returned to my house and took us away on a truck to a prison camp.*

**What were the conditions like in the prison?**

*It was more like a death camp than a prison. I was there for 16 months. We were crowded into rooms with no doors and with guards always watching us. We weren't allowed outside. The men were killed quickly, including my husband. Many children died from cold, from sleeping on cement, from hunger. Every day they would come and take some people away and shoot them. I didn't realize when I was brought there that I was pregnant. When I gave birth I named my twins for the commanders of the camp, which is considered a great honor. Later, when the order came to kill all of us, the commander had me and my family transferred to another prison in Kinshasa [capital of the*

*DRC]. Two weeks later I was sent to a protection center run by the Red Cross.*

**From Kinshasa you were evacuated to Cameroon as part of a U.S. government emergency program to resettle Tutsi refugees from the Congo. What did you think about coming to the United States?**

*It was a tremendous happiness to know that I would be allowed to live with my kids, that we would not be killed. In the death camp we thought every day would be the last day. Every morning was like a gift. You cannot imagine how happy I was to know that I would be allowed to live like other people.*

**What challenges did you face on arrival in the United States in July 2000?**

*There were so many challenges! I couldn't speak English, I had no friends, I was a single mother with nine children in a new country. But I was so happy that I was in a safe place.*

**What is Mapendo International and what is your role?**

*Mapendo International works to help those whose lives have been destroyed by war and violence and who have been overlooked by existing humanitarian assistance. Its founder [Sasha Chanoff] was part of the rescue team that evacuated me to Cameroon. He asked me and the other refugees so many questions about our lives. Then he asked if he could name his organization in my honor. I believe he thought that, through my story, people would get a better understanding of what it means to be a refugee.*

**Since coming to the U.S. you've been involved in a number of events to raise awareness of refugee issues, including the launch last month in New York of UNHCR's "Gimme Shelter" campaign. What motivates you?**

*Many people know about refugees from what they have seen on television or read in the newspaper. Because I have lived through it, I want to help them to see what refugees have gone through. I also want to remind them that refugees are just people like us. Because*

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NEWS BRIEFS

**Capsized Smuggler Boats Claim Lives of 15 Refugees**

Two smugglers' boats carrying Somalis and Ethiopians capsized in the high seas separating the Horn of Africa and Yemen in late January, leaving at least 15 people dead and a dozen missing.

The boats were transporting 270 people when they foundered in separate incidents in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. The first boat was carrying 150 passengers, mostly non-Somalis, from the Djibouti town of Obock. In the second incident, a boat carrying 120 people capsized on Sunday off the Yemeni town of Ahwar after leaving Mureira in Somalia and heading out into the Gulf of Aden. Nine bodies were recovered and buried by a local aid agency, while 99 people are known to have made it to shore. The remaining 12 are missing and feared dead.

Hundreds of Africans die every year trying to reach Yemen in search of a brighter future or to escape persecution and conflict. Many lose their lives in the turbulent waters separating the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

**Inflow of Refugees Strains Resources at Kenya Camp**

At the Ifo refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya, the rows of emergency tents reached the perimeter of the property in late December, meaning that the UNHCR facility has finally run out of space to put newly arriving Somali refugees.

"All refugees have to find a place with relatives or friends. We no longer have any land to provide them," said UNHCR Field Officer Leonidas Nkurunziza.

Some 230,000 people now live in the three adjacent camps at Dadaab, one of the world's oldest, largest and most congested refugee sites. UNHCR fears tens

of thousands more Somalis will arrive throughout this year in the remote corner of northeast Kenya as the situation in their troubled country deteriorates further.

The three Dadaab refugee camps—Ifo, Hagadera and Dagahaley—were built in 1991 to host 90,000 refugees. The continuing conflict in Somalia has led to a steady inflow of refugees over the subsequent years, and this shows no sign of easing up.

**Actor Ben Affleck Joins UNHCR Funding Effort**

Hollywood actor and director Ben Affleck joined UNHCR in New York in mid-December to launch a global campaign to aid those uprooted by continuing conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Central to the campaign is a short film directed by Affleck and shot in November in North Kivu province, where tens of thousands have fled for their lives since fighting resumed earlier this year.

The "Gimme Shelter" campaign takes its name from the classic Rolling Stones song, which provides the film's soundtrack and which was donated to UNHCR by the group.

"UNHCR is on the ground helping those affected by the violence by pro-

viding protection, shelter, water. But these actions are only possible with financial support," he told guests at a screening of the film. "What we've tried to do through the film is to answer the question, "What can I do to help as one individual?" The answer to that is to care."

For more information, and to see the video, visit: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

**Report Indicts Sudanese For Attack in IDP Camp**

Sudanese forces violated international human rights law by using lethal force in "an unnecessary, disproportionate and therefore unlawful manner," when they fired on a crowd in a displaced persons camp in Darfur last August, killing 33 civilians, according to a new UNHCR report issued in late January.

Witness testimonies confirmed that security forces shot arbitrarily at a large crowd of IDPs in the Kalma camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in South Darfur. Among the 108 civilians wounded were many women and children. Home to about 80,000 IDPs, the security forces were assigned to execute a search warrant for illegal weapons and drugs. When they were confronted by a group of camp residents who tried to stop them from entering the camp, the forces opened fire, the report said.

**FY 2009 African Refugee Admissions**

As of January 31, 2009 • Ceiling for FY 2009 is 12,000

Country of Origin	Refugees	Country of Origin	Refugees
Angola	1	Nigeria	2
Burundi	306	Rwanda	39
Cameroon	2	Sierra Leone	15
Congo	32	Somalia	1,139
Dem. Rep. Congo	301	Sudan	106
Eritrea	240	Togo	10
Ethiopia	88	Uganda	1
Gambia	9	Zimbabwe	4
Guinea	3		
Liberia	52	TOTAL	2,361
Mauritania	11		

Source: U.S. Department of State, PRM



**Conference Announcement**

**ECDC will hold its 15th national conference May 4-6 at the Holiday Inn Ballston in Arlington, Virginia. The conference theme is: *The Future of African Refugees and Immigrants: A Time for New Thinking*. For full conference and hotel information , visit: [www.ecdcinternational.org](http://www.ecdcinternational.org). Registration will begin in February.**

**UNFPA Applauds Action on Population Fund**

Applauding President Obama’s decision to restore United States funding for its operations, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said in late January that it marked a major step in helping to advance women’s health, rights and equality.

By resuming U.S. support, said UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, America will be joining

180 other donor nations in working toward slashing poverty, boosting the health of women and children, preventing HIV/AIDS and providing family planning assistance to women in 154 countries.

“President Obama’s decision could not have come at a more critical time,” said Obaid, noting that U.S. support totaling nearly \$250 million has been withheld for the past seven years. “If women are to stop dying in childbirth and if reproductive health for all is to become a reality, we need increased political and financial commitment at all levels to implement strategies that we know will work.”

The rate of death from pregnancy and childbirth—99 percent of which occur in developing countries—has fallen just one per cent between 1990 and 2005 around the world. Every minute, a woman dies giving life, totaling up to 10 million women during a generation, according to a report from the United Nations.

“Mr. Obama’s decision is an essential step towards creating a world where all women have the opportunity to participate as equal members of society,” the Executive Director noted.

***African Refugees in the News***

***Refugee Children in Missouri Seek Assimilation***

*Out of Africa and into a new world* is the headline on a January 3 article in The Columbia Missourian describing how African refugee students at a local elementary school are bringing new meaning to the phrase “culture shock.”

Written by Columbia School of Journalism students Morven McColluch, Jennifer Gordon and Katlin Chadwick, the feature focuses on 12 young refugee students who are attending Grant Elementary School in Columbia and struggling to achieve full assimilation into American life. About 50 African refugee children are enrolled in the area’s school system.

Among those attending Grant, six are from Tanzania, five from Somalia and one from Rwanda. All arrived with little

knowledge of the English language, spurring teachers to develop creative new ways to communicate. Some of the younger children have had no previous formal education.

“As a result” the article quotes English teacher Peg Hurley, “teachers and students alike often add alternative learning methods, such as art and music to help assimilate the students in their new world. The songs help a lot. They’re kind of an icebreaker. When you’re singing with the group, no one really knows if your saying the words right or not.”

The article is available on the web at: [www.columbiamissourian.com](http://www.columbiamissourian.com).

**Mapendo International...**

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*they are in a refugee camp doesn't mean they don't deserve happiness. We need to give refugees reasons to hope.*

**How are your twins who were born in the prison camp?**

*They're doing great. They are almost ten. They're in fourth grade. My oldest son is in college and my daughter is studying to be a nurse. I am so thankful for all the people who helped us and gave us hope. I came here as a widow without anything and now I can look at my kids and see they are successful like other children. It is a great joy and I thank the U.S. government for what it's done for refugees.*

For more information and a video of Sarandon’s CNN tribute, visit:

[www.mapendo.org](http://www.mapendo.org)

**African Refugee NETWORK**

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## Geneva Conference Addresses Plight of ‘Warehoused’ Refugees

Noting that millions of refugees remain trapped in interminable exile, UNHCR António Guterres ended a two-day conference in Geneva in mid-December by calling for the development of specific, comprehensive solutions to end their plight.

“The message of this dialogue has been very clear—protracted situations cannot and should not be allowed to fester,” Guterres told more than 300 representatives from over 50 governments and several organizations.

Participants convened in four working groups examining various approaches aimed at finding solutions for the 6 million refugees in some 30 different situations worldwide who have been in exile for at least five years—many of them for decades.

They cannot go home because their countries of origin are at war, are affected by serious human rights violations or other reasons. Only a small proportion of them have a chance of being resettled to a third country, and in many cases their first asylum country will not allow them to fully integrate or become citizens. Over time, the international community loses interest in them and funding dries up.

Summing up the discussions during the second annual High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges, Guterres said political will was a main precondition for finding durable solutions. He said participants recognized that each protracted situation was unique and solutions must be comprehensive, using a combination of approaches that can include repatriation, integration in first countries of asylum, and resettlement to a third country.

Participants stressed that international solidarity and burden-sharing were essen-

tial and could take many forms, he said. These could include the provision of resettlement places; ensuring that voluntary repatriation and reintegration are sustainable; supporting self-reliance activities; and fostering local integration. Overall, however, repatriation remains the preferred solution whenever feasible.

“We all realize there is no one-size-fits-all solution,” Guterres said. “We need a common approach, but each case requires an objective analysis in order to move forward.”

A number of countries hosting refugees expressed reservations about their ability to offer local integration, Guterres said, adding that those concerns had been understood and acknowledged. But that inability does not mean that self-reliance cannot be promoted among refugees during exile as a way of enhancing their prospects for successful repatriation or resettlement to another country. Participants emphasized the importance of providing education, including secondary and vocational education, as ways of building such self-reliance.

Guterres said there was also strong endorsement among participants for expanding the strategic use of resettlement. Many participants encouraged resettlement countries to make more places available, and UNHCR will work with those countries to achieve this goal while strengthening its own performance.

Declaring that the dialogue should not be an isolated event, Guterres said it should lead to a broader process and a number of continuing initiatives. With the agreement of host countries, UNHCR will now consult with its stakeholders to explore the most appropriate ways of seeking comprehensive, burden-sharing

solutions in specific situations.

Action plans will also be discussed in detail and common strategies defined, wherever possible with countries of origin. Working groups will explore the use of each of the three durable solutions—repatriation, resettlement and local integration—in resolving protracted situations. Regional initiatives will also be explored.

The implications of the urbanization of refugee populations also needed study, Guterres said. Increasing numbers of refugees are now found in urban settings, often without an effective support structure or legal right to be there. Many are from rural areas in their own countries and will find it difficult to return and reintegrate when they are finally able to return home.

### CALENDAR

**February 23-24** — The first annual conference conducted by the Association of Refugee Service Professionals (ARSP) will be held at the School of Social Work Utopia Theater at the University of Texas in Austin. The conference theme is “Balancing Compassion for Refugees and Compassion for Yourself.” For information, visit: [www.refugeeprofessionals.org](http://www.refugeeprofessionals.org)

**May 4-6** — ECDC’s 15th national conference on African refugees will be held at the Holiday Inn Ballston in Arlington, VA. For information, visit: [www.ecdcinternational.org](http://www.ecdcinternational.org).

### RESOURCES

*Teacher’s Corner* is a UNHCR resource for educators, parents and students engaged in—or concerned about—such issues as refugee affairs, human rights and tolerance. It offers access to a wealth of tools, including brochures, videos, lesson plans and an E-Alert program that will bring to subscribers breaking news about refugees and ideas for classroom projects.

It is available through the website of USA for UNHCR at: [www.unrefugees.org](http://www.unrefugees.org).



**High Commissioner Guterres opens the two-day dialogue in Geneva aimed at seeking solutions for millions of people caught up in protracted refugee situations around the world.**

UNHCR photo by S. Hopper