

## Concept Note

### Background

Since 25 August, more than half a million people – nearly all of whom are Rohingya refugees -- have fled violence and insecurity in Myanmar's Rakhine State and sought refuge in neighbouring Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This massive influx is the largest refugee movement in the region in decades, and brings the total number of refugees living in Cox's Bazar to more than 800,000 people. The speed and scale of the influx has resulted in a critical refugee emergency: without a rapid, comprehensive response, there will be severe consequences on the lives of refugees, many of whom are women and children.

Refugees are mainly concentrated in two upazilas (sub-districts), Ukhia and Teknaf, where they are putting an immense strain on infrastructure, services and the host population. Pre-existing settlements and camps have expanded enormously to accommodate new arrivals, while new spontaneous settlements have also formed and are quickly growing. Of 519,000 arrivals since 25 August, 82 per cent are living in makeshift camps or spontaneous settlements (as of 9 October). Significant numbers of new arrivals are being whole-heartedly hosted by local communities. Protection risks remain enormous, refugees have experienced traumatic events and face threats ranging from exploitation by boat operators, human trafficking, gender based violence, family separations as well as barriers to accessing the services they need. Conditions in these sites are often congested, with drastically inadequate facilities for the number of people present and arriving, including shortages of food, water, sanitation, shelter, and medical services. Risks of disease outbreak – including cholera – are very serious.

The basic needs, protection, human rights and eventual solutions for the refugees must be at the centre of the response. The Government and people of Bangladesh have generously welcomed the newly arrived refugees to an already densely populated country in addition to already hosting over 300,000 of them from past influxes (with more potentially to come). However, Bangladesh cannot be left to shoulder this responsibility alone. Over the last six weeks, donors have reacted swiftly to provide generous early funding, as well enabling the mobilization of rapid response funds through the CERF. Due to the timely contributions, humanitarian partners have delivered emergency food assistance to nearly 490,000 people, water and sanitation support to 300,000 refugees and host communities, immunization to 150,000 children, shelter kits to 150,000 people, and counselling and trauma support to over 50,000 people. In addition, over 27,000 children are receiving psychosocial support in 128 child friendly spaces. Under the leadership of the Government, humanitarian coordination arrangements are being strengthened and supported by operational partners on the ground.

Funding remains a major constraint, and additional financial support is urgently needed to meet life-saving assistance. In early October, partners revised the initial response plan to account for a much higher rate of new arrivals. The revised plan requires **US\$434 million to assist 1.2 million people, both refugees and host communities. To date, available funding and uncommitted pledges amount to roughly \$100 million.**

## Conference objectives

- Mobilize urgently needed resources to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection to refugees in Bangladesh and its host communities, including proper registration, as set out in the Response Plan.
- Demonstrate solidarity with the Government of Bangladesh and host communities, acknowledging the political, economic, social, developmental, humanitarian and human rights ramifications of the refugees who have fled Northern Rakhine, as well as the need to address their most urgent needs while promoting their resilience for which a comprehensive approach is necessary in line with the New Way of Working.
- Promote a response demonstrating full respect for international law, international human rights law, international refugee law, and where applicable, international humanitarian law, including for the protection and freedom of movement of civilians, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, and accountability for any violations.
- Promote safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of the refugees to the place of origin. The origins of the crisis are in Myanmar, and finding a sustainable solution to the situation in Northern Rakhine will remain critical. Advocacy efforts should continue for a credible, practical and speedy return process.

## Organization

The event is co-hosted by the European Union and the Government of Kuwait, and is being co-organized by IOM, OCHA and UNHCR. The Emergency Relief Coordinator Mr. Mark Lowcock will chair the conference; UNHCR and IOM will be represented by High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi and Director General Mr. William Lacy Swing.

## Participation and level of representation

- The event is scheduled for 09:30–16:00. Registration is mandatory, and a registration form will be attached to invitations. All Member States are invited, as well as leaders of relevant regional organizations, development finance institutions, UN organizations, and representatives of relevant humanitarian non-governmental organizations.
- Member States are asked to participate at ministerial level. The maximum size of delegation is four (head of delegation +3). We encourage participants to ensure gender balance in their delegations. Statements will be invited from the floor (see below).
- Member States are strongly encouraged to commit financial support ahead of the event in view of the urgency of the situation; pledges and commitments between now and the conference will be counted as conference pledges. A pledge form will be included with invitations.

## Format

- *Opening session:* The conference will be opened by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and will include statements from the co-hosts and co-organizers (European Union, the Government of Kuwait, UNHCR and IOM), the Government of Bangladesh and a representative from civil society. A short film will be screened illustrating the humanitarian situation of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.
- *A press stakeout* will be organized.
- *Statement and pledge announcements:* Statements and announcements of pledges by participating delegates will be invited from the floor and **should be limited to 3 minutes maximum**. The chairs will give the floor to Minister-level delegates followed by other participants.
- *Closing session:* Closing remarks jointly by the High Commissioner for Refugees and IOM Director General.

## Contacts

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