

OPENING

Allow me to start by dedicating this forum to the memory of Simon Russell, the former Global Protection Cluster Coordinator who passed away earlier this year.

Colleagues, friends welcome to the closing session of our Global Protection Forum.

Today's event should have happened last week. For technical reasons, as many of you are aware the platform that was hosting us totally collapsed.

Thank you for the kind messages of support and understanding, and warm thanks to all the speakers from frontline organisations and member states for agreeing without an ounce of hesitation to re-join us today.

Our event today is to wrap up a year that we shaped to be one of making our operations and our coordination systems fit better the majority of our members: frontline local responders.

On one hand, this was a tough year. Protection risks gained new grounds and increased in complexity and stubbornness.

On the other hand, this was a year where we have seen better recognition of and support for protection work in terms of resourcing, advocacy and political efforts.

So, tonight's event will be no different from the year.

It will first reflect on the risks and challenges we still face with Symphorien from Congo giving us an overall briefing on the state of protection.

Then we will hear from advocates and change makers who are leading groundbreaking efforts in Yemen, Afghanistan and Congo.

We will also hear from member states and their focus on protection looking forward to 2022.

My colleague Marie, our Head of Advocacy and Communication will be moderating this dynamic event.

To kick us off, our keynote address will be done by Nada. 14 years old. Calling to tell us her story from Gaza. Followed by remarks from Gillian Triggs, the Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees.

But now it is my pleasure to turn to you Nada.

Like all the children.

Like all frontline communities, Nada doesn't need to be given a voice.

She has a voice.

We just need to listen.

Nada, the floor is yours.

CLOSING

Nada, Symphorien, Shaharзад, Jonas and Tahany - - this was powerful.

You voiced issues that resonate with our challenges and work throughout this year.

You were clear and proved today like every other day that frontline communities and organisations have the clearest voice and are leading the progress on making protection central to the narrative, analysis and response far from capitals and processes.

To close this event and forum, I would like to echo two messages that we heard throughout the session:

First, it is conflict. Violence. Marginalisation. Violations of human rights that remain the biggest problem.

In 2021 we had 113M people at risk and in need of protection.

In 2022 we project this number to increase to 150M.

This is 37 M more people at protection risks.

This is one of the highest, worst increases in one year ever recorded.

It is driven by two trends:

- Renewed conflicts and crisis in Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Myanmar.
- Lack of solutions in stubborn crisis in places like Syria, Yemen and DR Congo.

Facing this challenge will require collective efforts from frontline negotiations and behaviour changes to security council resolutions and all the efforts in between.

Second, the trust in and recognition of protection expertise on the frontlines is growing.

Protection resources on the frontlines are substantially increasing.

I thank our donors and partners for prioritising protection.

Indeed, this year we estimate to have mobilised, received and operated around 1 BN USD for protection operations serving comprehensively over 23 M People. This is nearly 50 % increase compared to the previous year.

For next year we urge all donors and organisations to continue prioritising protection so we can continue addressing the stubborn protracted needs and stand by the additional 37 million people in need.

We need to do more for more, but we also need to do it better by getting the resources to the hands of frontline responders like Symphorien, Shaharзад, Jonas, Tahany and many others.

This year, we believe 18% of protection resources were operated by local partners.

It is a major improvement from our starting point. But short of our 25% commitment.

Let's hit that mark in 2022 and use it as springboard to do more.

This year we have kept promises and delivered better analysis, predictable minimum package for protection response, much stronger advocacy and smarter engagement with our local responders. We need to continue the trajectory.

However, our big drive for 2022 will be to bring back the simple, important and powerful notions of protection by presence and community-based protection.

We will need all hands-on deck to improve presence on the ground and ensure that access negotiation is measured by life saving trucks as well as active protection services and actors that can stay and deliver.

Not one or the other. Not one on the expense of the other.

Let me close by saying, the true measure of our collective work is simple:

Are we doing today in Ethiopia, Myanmar and Afghanistan better than we have done in Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Sudan a decade ago?

Centrality of protection was born from contexts where genocide and ethnic cleansing happened while everyone was somehow doing their job, but no one looked at the big picture, we waited for certainty of crimes before we acted, we believed it was someone else job.

That was wrong.

So we pledged never again. And our pledge is called Centrality of Protection.

We pledged to look at the big picture crimes and not look away.

We pledged to sound the alarm bell before the crimes happen.

We pledged to be responsible even if we are not accountable.

Leading on protection is not a matter of hierarchy.

It is a matter of frontline and truth proximity.

It is having the courage to go first, to trust first, to take risks first, to leap forward first, and to always be on the side of the communities.

And for this kind of leadership, that keeps protection central I thank you Nada, Symphorien, Shaharad, Jonas and Tahany – and through you all who you represent.

I thank our team, our coordinators, you colleagues on the ground and champions in capitals.

It is a tough year ahead. Our response capacity is robust. Our partnerships are far reaching.

Let's keep up the courage and keep the flame burning.