

UDC 327.7(6)+325.1“2001/2010”

UN INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS FORCED MIGRATION IN AFRICA IN THE EARLY 21st CENTURY

A. V. SELIVANOV^a

^aBelarusian State University, 4 Niezaliezhnasci Avenue, Minsk 220030, Belarus

Abstract. This article examines core UN initiatives on forced migration in Africa from 2001 to 2010, drawing on reports from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to the 56–66th UN General Assembly sessions and other relevant UN documents. Key initiatives assessed include the Global consultations on international protection, Convention plus, Dialogue on voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration in Africa, Ten-point plan of action, and High Commissioner’s Dialogue on protection challenges. The study finds that the UN has played a significant role in advancing international cooperation on forced migration in Africa. Several approaches proved successful, some ongoing, others concluded. The study emphasises the importance of beginning coordination between international and regional structures, expanding legal frameworks and more effective durable solutions. It also addresses issues such as protracted displacement scenarios, theoretical-practical disconnects, insufficient data, and emerging crises. Critically, the study calls for ongoing work on the underlying drivers of forced migration.

Keywords: Africa; international cooperation; forced migration; refugees; UN High Commissioner for Refugees; initiatives.

ИНИЦИАТИВЫ ООН НАЧАЛА ХХІ в. ПО РЕШЕНИЮ ПРОБЛЕМ ВЫНУЖДЕННОЙ МИГРАЦИИ В АФРИКЕ

А. В. СЕЛИВАНОВ¹⁾

¹⁾Белорусский государственный университет, пр. Независимости, 4, 220030, г. Минск, Беларусь

Аннотация. Анализируются доклады Верховного комиссара ООН по делам беженцев на 56–66-й сессиях Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН и ряд других документов и материалов ООН. Выделяются инициативы («Глобальные консультации по международной защите», «Конвенция плюс», «Диалог по вопросам добровольной репатриации и устойчивой реинтеграции в Африке», «Десятикомпонентный план действий», «Диалог Верховного комиссара ООН по проблемам защиты» и др.), направленные на решение проблем вынужденной миграции в Африке в первом десятилетии ХХІ в. Делается вывод о том, что ООН прилагала серьезные усилия для совершенствования международных мер реагирования на процессы вынужденной миграции в Африке. Выделены успешные инициативы, часть из которых реализуются в настоящее время. Подчеркивается важность координации взаимодействия международных и региональных структур на более высоком уровне, расширения правовых рамок, улучшения ситуации с долговременными решениями. Обращается внимание на излишнюю теоретизацию рассматриваемого вопроса, нерешенные ситуации и новые кризисы, пробелы в статистике. Подчеркивается необходимость устранения основных причин вынужденной миграции.

Ключевые слова: Африка; международное сотрудничество; вынужденная миграция; беженцы; Верховный комиссар ООН по делам беженцев; инициативы.

Образец цитирования:

Селиванов АВ. Инициативы ООН начала ХХІ в. по решению проблем вынужденной миграции в Африке. *Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. Международные отношения.* 2025;1:13–19 (на англ.).
EDN: QGJQGZ

For citation:

Selivanov AV. UN initiatives to address forced migration in Africa in the early 21st century. *Journal of the Belarusian State University. International Relations.* 2025;1:13–19.
EDN: QGJQGZ

Автор:

Андрей Владимирович Селиванов – кандидат исторических наук, доцент; доцент кафедры международных отношений факультета международных отношений.

Author:

Andrey V. Selivanov, PhD (history), docent; associate professor at the department of international relations, faculty of international relations.
selivanych@bsu.by

The early 2000s in Africa represent a complex and fascinating period for researchers. When examining the continent in the context to address forced migration, a number of the UN initiatives can be identified that were implemented in response to these challenges. The aim of the article is to map those efforts and assess their impact between 2001 and 2010 in Africa.

Russian-language scholarship offers limited coverage of this topic. Among the few publications relevant to this topic are articles by I. Todorovich, Yu. Morgun, and A. Selivanov [1; 2]. In the English-language literature A. Betts¹ has made important contributions, particularly in his analysis of refugee policy and UNHCR activities in Africa. Research of J. Crisp on protracted refugee situations in Africa provides valuable context [3]. To address this article's objective, UNHCR reports to the UN General Assembly covering 2001–2010 were analysed, supplemented where necessary by other relevant UNHCR publications.

Data of UNHCR indicate that refugee and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa levelled off or even declined slightly during the decade, although figures differ across sources. At the same time, as noted in the UNHCR report of 2001, by the early 2000s, the international protection system faced significant challenges: a growing number of refugees and IDPs affected by humanitarian crises who did not fall within the conventional refugee definition, changes in state attitudes towards arriving asylum seekers, security concerns, and other emerging concerns². These pressures prompted the UN to seek new instruments to manage forced migration. The most significant are outlined below.

An important initiative addressing the issue of forced migration in Africa was the launch of the **Global consultations on international protection**³ in 2000, supported by the UN General Assembly. Its aims were to reaffirm the 1951 Refugee convention's relevance, clarify its contemporary application, and develop enhanced protection mechanisms. States, international and non-governmental organisations, and academic specialists took part in this initiative. A notable event within these consultations was the December 2001 Ministerial meeting, hosted by Switzerland and UNHCR. States parties to the 1951 Convention and (or) its 1967 Protocol

adopted a Declaration reaffirming their commitment to these instruments⁴.

The meeting also adopted a **Programme of action** setting out six core objectives:

- 1) strengthening implementation of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol;
- 2) protecting refugees within broader migration movements;
- 3) more equitable burden-sharing, and stronger reception capacity;
- 4) more effective responses to security concerns;
- 5) renewed pursuit of durable solutions;
- 6) specific protection measures for refugee women and children⁵.

These discussions helped to identify additional tools and approaches for states and UNHCR to address complex refugee protection issues, leading to improved crisis responses across the continent.

The High Commissioner's report to the 57th General Assembly session emphasised strengthening partnerships as another significant initiative. In September 2001, UNHCR established a Task force on partnership, split into two sub-groups. One of them was dedicated to UN agencies, and the other to non-governmental organisations. Its mandate was to assess the situation, identify existing challenges, and rebuild and enhance UNHCR's engagement with partners⁶. While the direct impact of this initiative in Africa is difficult to measure from the analysed documents, the initiative generally contributed to expanding and improving resources for refugees and returnees, thus improving their conditions in host countries.

The report to the 58th General Assembly session introduced the comprehensive **Development assistance for refugees** (DAR) programme, designed to foster refugee self-reliance. DAR combined two strategies⁷.

The first was the 4Rs integrated approach (**repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction**) in post-conflict settings, implemented by UNHCR from 2002. Pilot African projects, such as support for returnees in Sierra Leone, involved in cooperation UNHCR, UNDP, and the World Bank. As the report noted, «potential areas of cooperation included information management, community empowerment projects and education rehabilitation in main areas of return». A pa-

¹Betts A. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/people/alexander-betts> (date of access: 30.04.2025).

²Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/56/12. Paras 11–18 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/449571> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

³Fiftieth anniversary of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and World Refugee Day. UN Doc. A/RES/55/74 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/428901> (date of access: 12.02.2025); Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/56/12. Para 19 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/449571> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁴Declaration of states parties to the 1951 Convention and (or) its 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees. UN Doc. HCR/MMSP/2001/09 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/2002/en/30933> (date of access: 13.03.2025).

⁵Agenda for protection. UN Doc. A/AC.96/965/Add.1 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/469473> (date of access: 23.10.2024).

⁶Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/57/12. Para 124 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/473855> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁷Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/58/12. Para 4 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/501258> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

parallel recovery programme in Eritrea promoted «sustainable socio-economic reintegration / rehabilitation for returnees through area-based approaches that also benefit IDPs and the host communities in affected areas». Significantly, national governments supported these activities⁸.

A next report cited successful applications of the 4Rs strategy in Burundi and Liberia. It underscored several critical factors: «the development of a comprehensive national strategy for all displaced persons with a community-based approach; involvement of all stakeholders – including confirmed ownership by the state and local authorities – from the outset of the process; integrated planning by the United Nations country team; and early donor engagement»⁹.

By the end of 2004, community-based reintegration projects were underway in Darfur under the 4Rs approach¹⁰. In 2005, an evaluation of the African implementation experience in Eritrea and Sierra Leone was conducted, and its findings were subsequently used «in the design, implementation and evaluation of repatriation programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Somalia and Southern Sudan»¹¹. Although subsequent reports did not explicitly reference the 4Rs, they continued to prioritise refugee repatriation and reintegration.

The **Development through local integration** (DLI) strategy formed the second pillar of the DAR programme. DLI was sought to promote refugee self-reliance within host communities¹².

The report to the 59th General Assembly session cited the Zambia initiative as a prominent example, which targeted 450 000 people, including 100 000 refugees, through measures to improve food security, infrastructure and access to public services¹³. The next year's report cited a smaller DLI pilot for Somali refugees in Tanzania¹⁴. Like the 4Rs, DLI disappeared from

subsequent reports, though local refugee integration processes continued receiving acknowledgement.

Notably, whilst the 58th General Assembly session report (para 4) initially presented 4Rs and DLI as integral DAR programme components¹⁵, later reports treated these three approaches as parallel or equivalent operational frameworks¹⁶.

The report to the 59th General Assembly session documented the launch in 2003 of another major initiative: **Convention plus**. This strategy included several key elements: resettlement as an effective tool of refugee protection and burden-sharing among host countries; frameworks to address secondary movements of refugees and asylum-seekers, which defined the roles and responsibilities of countries of origin, transit and destination; the strengthening of development assistance to address refugee-related challenges¹⁷. In November 2005, it was decided to integrate Convention plus initiative into UNHCR's core strategic framework¹⁸.

Regarding the impact of Convention plus initiative in Africa, the reports identified only one example of practical implementation: «The initiative stimulated efforts to develop a Comprehensive plan of action (CPA) for Somali refugees, which is intended to be regional in scope and builds on opportunities to consolidate voluntary repatriation and reintegration activities for the more than 1 million refugees who have returned primarily to the northern parts of the country, and to prepare for voluntary repatriation to south and central Somalia, as well as other potential solutions by working with refugees in their countries of asylum»¹⁹.

The UNHCR reported to the 59th General Assembly session that «the consolidation of numerous peace processes in the past 18 months has raised great optimism for the continuation of large-scale repatriation operations on the continent»²⁰. In March 2004, UNHCR convened the **Dialogue on voluntary repatriation and**

⁸Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/58/12. Para 44 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/501258> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁹Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/59/12. Para 26 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533788> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹⁰Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/60/12. Para 35 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/558965> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹¹Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/61/12. Para 48 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/585475> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹²Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/58/12. Para 4 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/501258> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹³Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/59/12. Para 42 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533788> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹⁴Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/60/12. Para 24 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/558965> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹⁵Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/58/12. Para 4 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/501258> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹⁶Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/60/12. Paras 22–24 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/558965> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹⁷Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/59/12. Para 22 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533788> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

¹⁸Providing international protection [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/449267820.pdf> (date of access: 03.03.2025).

¹⁹Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/60/12. Para 28 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/558965> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²⁰Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/59/12. Para 35 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533788> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

sustainable reintegration in Africa. This one-off initiative improved prospects for the return of up to two million refugees. This dialogue also reaffirmed the need for tailored approaches to conflict prevention and resolution in African states, and highlighted broad support for the involvement of the African Union (AU), subregional organisations, and the UN in consultative, political, and financial roles²¹.

In 2005, as part of the broader humanitarian reform initiated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the **cluster approach** was introduced. This approach was designed to make humanitarian responses more predictable and effectiveness through improved coordination among stakeholders in key sectors such as protection, health, shelter, and logistics. UNHCR operationalised this approach in early 2006, assuming «global cluster lead for conflict-induced internal displacement situations in the areas of protection, camp management / coordination and emergency shelter»²².

In Africa, the cluster approach reinforced protection frameworks, particularly for IDPs, by promoting inter-agency coordination. In eastern Chad, for example, in September 2006 UNHCR moved two camps away from the border and issued Operational guidelines on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum²³. In Darfur, Sudan, the AU and UN hybrid operation, established in July 2007, was mandated to protect civilians. In Chad and the Central African Republic, a multidimensional mission supported by European Union forces began in September 2007. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR used the protection cluster to train troops in a «zero tolerance» policy towards sexual and gender-based violence, while advising IDPs on reparations. Following Kenya's 2007 elections, which displaced roughly 350 000 people, UNHCR rapidly deployed emergency staff and resources to support inter-agency²⁴. This initiative continues to date.

As stated in the High Commissioner's 2006 report to the General Assembly, UNHCR implemented measures to «operationalise protection» and strengthen agency capacity amid evolving circumstances. Key actions included institutionalising high-level dialogues, forming a Field

reference group on protection policies, creating a protection monitoring tool, and adopting the Age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) framework²⁵.

The 2005 evaluation of the 4Rs approach informed the design, execution, and assessment of repatriation programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Somalia, and Southern Sudan. AGDM assessments complemented these efforts by broadening refugees' access to durable solutions. However, the agency acknowledged that «in some situations, the slow implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives threatens the sustainability of the reintegration of those who have repatriated»²⁶.

The following year's report attested to the successful implementation of AGDM in 2006 across 41 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe, covering a total of 97 UNHCR offices (interestingly, more than 90 states were scheduled to participate). By the end of 2007, more than 100 country operations had completed AGDM implementation. For example, Morocco's self-reliance programme for women, children, older persons and people with disabilities established women's cooperatives and increased female representation in refugee committees²⁷.

Among the decade's most significant initiatives was the **Ten-point plan of action on refugee protection and mixed migration** (here and further Ten-point plan). This framework aimed to address challenges arising from population movements, encompassing both forced displacement and economic migration. The concept of «mixed migration flows» gained prominence during this period.

The Ten-Point plan acknowledged the inherent difficulty in «identifying refugees within broader irregular mixed flows..., especially where individuals themselves have various motives for moving. Once identified, refugees require protection against refoulement, the possibility to become self-reliant, and access to durable solutions»²⁸.

The Ten-point plan's components were cooperation among key partners, data collection and analysis, protection-sensitive entry systems, reception arrangements, mechanisms for screening and referral, differentiated processes and procedures, solutions for refugees,

²¹Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/59/12. Para 35 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533788> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²²Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/61/12. Para 36 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/585475> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²³Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/62/12. Para 17 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/610909> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²⁴Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/63/12. Paras 13–15 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/640415> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²⁵Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/61/12. Para 8 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/585475> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²⁶Ibid. Para 48.

²⁷Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/61/12. Para 52 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/585475> (date of access: 12.02.2025) ; Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/62/12. Para 41 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/610909> (date of access: 12.02.2025) ; Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/63/12. Para 43 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/640415> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

²⁸Refugee protection and mixed migration: the 10-point plan in action. P. 8 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/in/sites/en-in/files/legacy-pdf/50a4c2b09.pdf> (date of access: 01.01.2025).

addressing secondary movements, return arrangements for non-refugees and alternative migration options, information strategy²⁹.

In Africa, UNHCR contributed to the development of long-term solutions and capacity-building for both governmental and non-governmental local actors, placing particular emphasis on refugee status determination. Mauritania and Morocco introduced whole-of-society mechanisms to promote «a comprehensive approach with all stakeholders». The High Commissioner's report noted that in September 2006, authorities in north-eastern Somalia (Puntland) responded to irregular migration through arrests, detention, and deportation. UNHCR and its partners provided protection and humanitarian assistance to persons of concern, including refugee status determination for those seeking international protection³⁰.

Regionally and globally, UNHCR maintained its engagement in the follow-up to the Ten-point plan. A key component was a project (2008–2010) to operationalise the plan in Africa and other regions. This had two parts: the development of implementation strategies through regional conferences. The first, in May 2008, addressed mixed migration across the Gulf of Aden within the broader context of African population movements. The second conference, co-organised with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the International Organization for Migration, focused on protection challenges and opportunities arising from intra-regional migration in West Africa. Expert round tables further refined the Ten-point plan, including

a July 2009 meeting in Tunis which explored cooperation mechanisms for identifying and protecting individuals with specific needs within mixed flows³¹.

More than a set of norms, the Ten-point plan serves as a practical toolkit for implementation, supporting states and partner organisations in capacity-building. UNHCR recognised that its success depended on strategic leadership, peer learning and continued knowledge exchange.

The High Commissioner's Dialogue on protection challenges, launched in Geneva in December 2007, serves as an important forum for addressing emerging international protection issues. The High Commissioner's report to the General Assembly explained the initiative's purpose: «To encourage further engagement in some of the current challenges facing UNHCR and its partners in providing protection and assistance for refugees and other persons of concern to the office, in December 2007, the High Commissioner held the first of a planned series of annual events in Geneva: a Dialogue on protection challenges. The aim was to facilitate open and non-directive discussions between the office, states and other stakeholders on issues related to protection. The first Dialogue on protection challenges addressed some of the problems of assuring protection for people caught up in mixed migration movements which have been growing in scale and complexity in recent years»³².

The table below outlines themes and key questions from the dialogues.

Overview of UNHCR's dialogues on protection challenges (2007–2010)

Year	Topics	Key issues discussed
2007	Refugee protection, durable solutions, and international migration	Linkages between protection, solutions, and migration; challenges posed by mixed migration flows; partnership-building; human rights and humanitarian considerations in maritime rescue; the need to distinguish refugees from other migrants; terminology
2008	Protracted refugee situations	Challenges and opportunities for refugees in camp, rural, and urban settings; the Special initiative on protracted situations; tools for resolving long-standing displacement; the role of host countries and the international community
2009	Challenges for people of concern to UNHCR in urban settings	Barriers faced by displaced persons in urban areas; humanitarian consequences of urbanisation; adapting to urban displacement; identification, outreach, protection, solutions, gender and age considerations, education, livelihoods, and housing
2010	Protection gaps and responses	Gaps in the international protection regime for forcibly displaced and stateless persons; international cooperation and responsibility-sharing; comprehensive regional approaches; legislative and implementation gaps; statelessness issues

Note. Compiled on the basis of UNHCR's dialogue³³.

²⁹The 10-point plan in action [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/asylum-and-migration/10-point-plan-action> (date of access: 01.01.2025).

³⁰Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/62/12. Para 28 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/610909> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

³¹UNHCR's 10-point plan in Central America, Western Africa, Eastern Africa and Asia – a three-year project [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.refworld.org/policy/strategy/unhcr/2009/en/68724> (date of access: 15.02.2025).

³²Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/63/12. Para 21 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/640415> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

³³High Commissioner's dialogue [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/high-commissioner/high-commissioners-dialogue> (date of access: 15.04.2025).

Each dialogue has included a significant African dimension. The 2007 dialogue focused on mixed migration and the obligation to uphold human rights along routes such as the Gulf of Aden, irrespective of movement motives. This discussion emphasised integrating refugee safeguards within wider international migration frameworks³⁴. Participants also drew on the Ten-point plan as a practical tool for managing mixed flows, noting a related three-year project focused on Africa³⁵.

The 2008 dialogue addressed protracted refugee situations and presented Tanzania's experience. In a keynote statement, Prime Minister M. P. Pinda outlined efforts to resolve one of Africa's longest-standing refugee situations³⁶ by offering Burundian refugees, arriving in 1972, a choice between repatriation and local integration. Approximately 80 % chose to remain, having been born and raised there. The government committed to their integration while requesting further international financial support³⁷. The case illustrated how African states can deliver durable solutions when donors provide sustained backing. The discussion fed into UNHCR's subsequent Global plan of action on protracted situations³⁸.

The 2009 dialogue examined urban challenges, directly addressing Africa's rapid urbanisation. Participants noted Africa's population is projected to reach nearly two billion by 2050, with 88 % of this growth occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and the majority residing in cities³⁹. A round table before the dialogue gathered mayors from 20 major global cities hosting sizeable refugee populations, who highlighted overstretched infrastructure, housing shortages, weak services and growing xenophobia and violence⁴⁰. African municipal authorities shaped policy rather than merely participating as stakeholders. The Mayor of Nairobi, G. Majiwa, co-chaired a working session. UNHCR committed to strengthening urban operations by deepening local partnerships and supporting municipal protection strategies⁴¹.

The 2010 dialogue on protection gaps and responses continued to accent emphasised comprehensive regional approaches and equitable burden-sharing⁴². This focus was highly relevant for Africa, where displaced people and host communities alike face severe constraints in meeting basic needs⁴³.

The dialogue has demonstrated effectiveness as a forum for addressing specific protection issues, including those affecting African countries.

Thus, the 2001–2010 decade witnessed substantial evolution in international responses to forced migration in Africa. While progress was made, major obstacles continued to hinder effective protection and assistance. Over the decade, the international community, primarily through the UN, developed a more nuanced understanding of displacement. The approach shifted from short-term humanitarian relief to more comprehensive, strategic interventions in the region.

Coordination improved across UN agencies and key regional and international actors. Thus, the International Organisation for Migration has become involved in the African issue of forced migration. Legal tools expanded, large-scale repatriations took place, and local integration schemes advanced. New mechanisms also helped to identify refugees within mixed migration flows and kept the search for durable solutions at the forefront.

However, implementation exposed several shortcomings. Some initiatives proved too conceptual and impractical. Protracted situations endured, new refugee crises arose, and voluntary return rates stayed low. Furthermore, reliable, disaggregated data remained inconsistently available.

International efforts must shift the focus from crisis response to addressing the main roots of forced migration, including political instability, conflict, etc., and creating conditions for the economic development in Africa. That requires effective dialogues and discussions within the UN.

³⁴Regional conference on «Refugee protection and international migration in the Gulf of Aden» [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/483bca812.pdf> (date of access: 15.04.2025).

³⁵Refugee and protection and durable solutions in the context of international migration and development [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/200911_unpd_cm8_unhcr.pdf (date of access: 15.04.2025).

³⁶2nd UNHCR Dialogue on protection challenges [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/2nd-unhcr-dialogue-protection-challenges-10-december-2008-keynote-honourable-mizengo-peter> (date of access: 15.04.2025).

³⁷Dobbs L. Q&A: Prime Minister Pinda on Tanzania's protracted refugee situation [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/qa-prime-minister-pinda-tanzanias-protracted-refugee-situation> (date of access: 15.04.2025).

³⁸Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UN Doc. A/65/12. Para 52 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/692011> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

³⁹Concept paper High Commissioner's Dialogue on protection challenges. Challenges for persons of concern to UNHCR in urban settings [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.refworld.org/policy/strategy/unhcr/2009/en/67014> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁴⁰High Commissioner's Dialogue on protection challenges [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/events/high-commissioners-dialogue-protection-challenges-2009> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁴¹47th Meeting of the Standing Committee [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/4b-910b1e9.pdf> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁴²High Commissioner's Dialogue on protection challenges [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/events/high-commissioners-dialogue-protection-challenges-2010> (date of access: 12.02.2025).

⁴³Refugee and protection and durable solutions in the context of international migration and development [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/200911_unpd_cm8_unhcr.pdf (date of access: 15.04.2025).

References

1. Тодорович И, Моргун Ю, Селиванов А. Беженцы в мире: 2002. Достижения и проблемы. *Белорусский журнал международного права и международных отношений*. 2003;2:37–41.
2. Тодорович И, Моргун Ю, Селиванов А. Решение проблемы беженцев в начале XXI в. *Журнал международного права и международных отношений*. 2005;1:29–34.
3. Crisp J. No solutions in sight: the problem of protracted refugee situations in Africa: new issues in refugee research [Internet; cited 2025 April 30]. Available from: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/no-solutions-sight-problem-protracted-refugee-situations-africa-jeff-crisp>.

Received by editorial board 03.05.2025.