

FUTURE FOCUS: AFRICA HUMANITARIAN ACTION MARKS 25 YEARS

AHA's 25th Anniversary highlights the role of African NGOs and civil society in the search for durable solutions for forced displacement in the continent

ADDIS ABEBA, 30 October 2019

Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA) observed its 25 years of service to forcibly displaced communities in Africa with activities held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 23 – 25 October 2019.

On 23 October, AHA held its Assembly of Trustees in which its highest governing body took a close look at the organisation's past performance, achievements and challenges. After a thorough assessment of AHA's current policies, programmes and financial standing, the Assembly recommended strategies for a renewed way forward. It resolved to revitalise the existing statutory bodies and overall vision and mission of AHA.

Following the Assembly, Trustees, friends of AHA, AU member state and UNHCR delegates visited the Gashora Transit Center about 60kms outside of Kigali where AHA provides comprehensive health and nutrition services. This Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) was set up through a responsibility sharing agreement between the Government of Rwanda, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide urgent and lifesaving assistance to African refugees and asylum-seekers currently held in detention centers in Libya.

On the evening of October 23, AHA commemorated its 25-year journey with a recognition reception in which it honoured Ms. Sadako Ogata, UNHCR High Commissioner from 1991 to 2000, as a Luminary Humanitarian for the leadership she provided in some of the largest crises of that decade, including the Rwanda genocide against Tutsis, which gave birth to AHA's first response. AHA also honoured its Chair, Co-Chair, Founder, Co-Founders, Trustees and pioneer staff. The recognition reception was attended by delegates from the Government of Rwanda, UNHCR, AU member states, and various non-governmental organisations and members of the private sector.

On October 24 – 25, AHA co-hosted a Continental Consultative Meeting (CCM) with the AU, UNHCR, and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) which was attended by some 170 delegates from AU member states, civil society and relevant actors from the humanitarian community. Convened on the occasion of the AU 2019 theme of the year, the CCM aspired to strengthen solidarity and responsibility sharing to tackle root causes of – and find durable solutions to – forced displacement in Africa.

In her opening remarks, the Hon. Minister Germaine Kamayirese, Minister in Charge of Emergency Management, highlighted the Government of Rwanda's responsibility sharing work as a host nation to more than 190,000 refugees and asylum seekers. She underscored the urgent need for a "more equitable sharing of responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees, but most importantly to tackle the root causes of forced displacement and find solutions." This notion was reiterated by many participants at the meeting.

The meeting also shed light on the important role of civil societies. AHA President, Dr. Dawit Zawde in his panel contribution on *the role of African civil society organisations in humanitarian action*, emphasized that "local CSOs have proven comparative advantages in tackling complex humanitarian needs", and offered concrete suggestions to design lasting and relevant programmes for strengthening the capacity of African CSOs.

AHA's 25-year journey and the role it played in pan-African humanitarianism was recognised by all throughout these events.

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