

XVI. POPULATION, REFUGEES AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A UNHCR PERSPECTIVE

A. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this paper is to analyze the relevance of the Programme of Action of the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for refugees. In doing so, an effort is undertaken to identify refugee population aspects that are missing from the Programme

The period 1994-2003 witnessed the arrival of an estimated 5.3 million asylum-seekers in the industrialized countries, putting a severe strain on asylum systems, particularly in Europe. Following a peak in 2001, the annual number of asylum claims has generally decreased to reach 468,000 in 2003. The leading countries of origin of asylum-seekers were Serbia and Montenegro (550,000), Iraq (360,000) and Turkey (300,000). While the number of conflicts producing new refugee outflows has decreased in recent years, receiving countries have also put in place restrictive measures. The erosion of the institution of asylum therefore remains a central issue for UNHCR (see ICPD Programme of Action objective 10.22(d)). Of those who seek asylum, only a minority are granted refugee status or allowed to remain on humanitarian grounds. The return of asylum-seekers not in need of international protection, while a main preoccupation of Gove

In a way, refugees are a microcosm of the world's population. It could therefore be argued that the importance of the Programme of Action is not limited to Chapter X, but that other Chapters are equally relevant. Just like non-refugees, refugees should benefit from poverty eradication (Chapter III), they should enjoy gender equality (Chapter IV), the protection of their families (Chapter V), access to sustainable population growth (Chapter VI), have reproductive rights (Chapter VII) and enjoy access to health care (Chapter VIII).

The same observation can be applied to the MDGs. Although none of the eight current MDGs

