

## UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Protection hails Ivorian Refugee Repatriation

**Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9 April 2022 (UNHCR)** - The UN Refugee Agency Assistant High Commissioner (AHC) for Protection, Madam Gillian Triggs, has described the ongoing Ivorian refugee repatriation as a remarkable achievement at a time when the world is contending with new conflicts.

Since 2011, more than 306,000 Ivorian refugees have returned home, including more than 107,000 whose return have been facilitated by UNHCR and partners.

During her three-day visit to Côte d'Ivoire from 6-8 April, Madam Triggs witnessed firsthand the repatriation of Ivorian refugees as cessation of refugee status for Ivorians ends on 30 June 2022. "Cessation of refugee status does not happen very often. These are troubled times internationally, so this calls for celebration," she said, applauding the Government of Liberia for serving as the biggest host of Ivorian refugees in the region over the past twenty years, and thanking the Ivorian government for also hosting hundreds of refugees. Madam Triggs also noted that Ivorian refugees who would opt to stay in asylum countries would be protected by working in collaboration with host countries for the necessary documentation.

Before coming to Côte d'Ivoire, the AHC visited Liberia from where she accompanied 245 Ivorian refugees by road and across the Cavally river, the natural boundary between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, using a barge. "It was a very exciting, moving, and joyous event to accompany the refugees as they crossed over to a warm welcome by Ivorian authorities, UNHCR, and partners. Our role is not yet over. We will continue to work with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and partners to ensure the smooth reintegration of the returnees," she assured.

Madam Triggs visited some reintegration projects during which some returnees expressed gratitude for UNHCR's support to them. The AHC also held meetings with various local authorities, including some government ministers, the UN Country Team during which reintegration of returnees and statelessness issues were discussed.

The Ivorian internal conflicts of 2002-2007 and 2011-2012 each resulted in large-scale civilian displacement inside and outside the country. From December 2010 to late February 2011, post-election violence displaced thousands of Ivorians. A third displacement happened from mid-2020 to early 2021 during which Ivorians fled in anticipation of potential violence associated with elections.

"In view of the improvement in the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire, more than 32,000 Ivorian refugees have returned home since April 2011," remarked the UNHCR Representative in Côte d'Ivoire, Madam Angele Djohossou.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, is expected in Côte d'Ivoire for this year's World Refugee Day on 20 June to mark the cessation of refugee status for Ivorians.

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