

High-level BMZ visit to Mauritania highlights joint work by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP in fragile contexts

NOUAKCHOTT, December 2nd, 2022 - Today, BMZ, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP ended a five-day visit to Mauritania that included Ministerial-level discussions and a field trip to Hodh Chargui. It is the first time that the four agencies have undertaken such a visit, which provided deep insights into the results that can be achieved when humanitarian, development and peace actors collaborate in mitigating shocks and building resilience in communities affected by forced displacement and climatic shocks.

Since 2012, Mauritania has been hosting Malian refugees, which now number 89,468 in its southern region of Hodh Chargui. It has fully committed itself to a policy of inclusion, taking steps to ensure refugees access services on par with nationals. Mauritania is also a country making concerted efforts to alleviate poverty and bring services to communities in its fragile border region. Mauritania serves as a model for countries experiencing similar challenges with forced displacement, fragility, and climatic shocks.

The four-member delegation was led by BMZ's Commissioner for Refugee Policy and Director for Displacement, Prevention and Crisis Management Dr Elke Löbel. Its findings will inform institutional learning and future collaboration between the three UN agencies, WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR, on the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus. Lessons learned in Mauritania can also guide the work of other development and humanitarian actors.

WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR have enjoyed a strong joint collaboration with the Government of Mauritania for several decades. In the region of Hodh Chargui, BMZ funding in recent years has allowed the three agencies to step up their collaboration and better integrate humanitarian, development, and peace initiatives in support of government priorities, local systems and services, as well as social cohesion.

In Nouakchott, the delegation met with the Minister of Economic Affairs and Promotion of Productive Sectors, the Minister of Interior and Decentralization, and the General Delegate for National Solidarity and the Fight against Exclusion "Taazour" (National Social Protection Agency).

In Hodh Chargui, the delegation spent a day in the M'Bera camp, visiting a school, internet connectivity centre, medical clinic and registration point, and consulting with refugees and partners. A full day was also spent in Amourj with Mauritanian communities engaged in resilience building activities centred on education and nutrition and complemented by a comprehensive social protection package.

"I strongly believe that by working together we can achieve more. And I was so pleased to witness this in action in Mauritania— UN agencies, development actors, local NGOs, local

government, refugees, host communities collaborating every step of the way to build resilience and overcome chronic vulnerability” stated Dr. Löbel.

“Insecurity in the Sahel is spreading alongside the risks associated with climate change, the COVID pandemic and the nutrition crisis. Mauritania is a country invested in its people and welcoming refugees, which is a means to foster peace and stability. Our aim is to support this commitment through partnership. I was impressed by the level of community engagement, and we need to strengthen especially women and youth. This is a key ingredient for more durable approaches to addressing risks. “