Message from the UNHCR Representative to all refugees in Ethiopia on World Refugee Day

20 June 2020

Dear Refugees,

As you all know, World Refugee Day is observed every year on 20 June, which is dedicated to recognizing the courage and endurance of those who have been forced to flee from their homes.

In previous years, millions of people from around the world have taken part in various activities to mark this special day, either through dances, sport events, fashion shows, concerts, among other actions. Unfortunately, this year we cannot gather in large groups to celebrate your strength and resilience, for which we ask for your understanding. However, we must continue to protect each other by keeping a safe distance during this time of COVID-19.

This does not mean that World Refugee Day is cancelled; it just means that we need to continue adapting our everyday lives to the current situation. Personally, this is my first World Refugee Day during my 25-year career with UNHCR that I will not be physically in the presence of refugees.

The theme for this year’s World Refugee Day is “Everyone Can make a Difference, Every Action Counts”. Your actions in your communities are more important now than ever before. You have already shown in the last few months how important your contributions are in preventing the spread of COVID-19, by maintaining physical distance, washing your hands regularly, wearing masks, limiting your movement, etc. Every action counts – and for this, I thank you.

UNHCR will continue to support you and your families in these difficult times. All of our offices in coordination with ARRA and other partners, throughout Ethiopia, remain operational to provide protection and assistance. While some of our activities have been adapted to the current circumstances, and some have been temporarily suspended, I assure you that UNHCR is staying and delivering.

This year’s World Refugee Day, through this letter, is meant to celebrate the strength, solidarity and actions of all of you in these difficult times. By actively taking preventive measures against COVID-19, you are contributing to a safer Ethiopia for us all. We at UNHCR applaud you for that.

I wish you all a peaceful World Refugee Day.

Ann Enenatre
UNHCR Representative in Ethiopia