

The High Commissioner



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UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres

A former Portuguese prime minister, António Guterres was elected by the UN General Assembly to become the 10th United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in June 2005.

As High Commissioner, he heads one of the world's foremost humanitarian organizations. UNHCR has twice won the Nobel Peace Prize. Its over 9,300 staff members work in 123 countries providing protection and assistance to more than 46 million refugees, returnees, internally displaced people and stateless persons. Some 88 per cent of UNHCR staff work in the field, often in difficult and dangerous duty stations. The organization's needs-based budget for 2015 is US\$6.8 billion.

Before joining UNHCR, Guterres spent more than 20 years in government and public service. He served as Portuguese prime minister from 1995 to 2002, during which time he was heavily involved in the international effort to resolve the crisis in East Timor. As president of the European Council in early 2000, he led the adoption of the so-called Lisbon Agenda and co-chaired the first European Union-Africa summit. He also founded the Portuguese Refugee Council in 1991 and was part of the Council of State of Portugal from 1991 to 2002.

From 1981 to 1983, Guterres was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, as well as chairman of the Committee on Demography, Migration and Refugees. In addition, he has been active in Socialist International, a worldwide

organization of social democratic political parties. He was the group's vice-president from 1992 to 1999 and president from 1999 until mid-2005.

Guterres was born on April 30, 1949, in Lisbon and educated at the Instituto Superior Técnico, where he remains a visiting professor.

He is married and has two children.