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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 42nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 November 2022, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Blanco Conde ..... (Dominican Republic)  
*later:* Mr. Venancio Guerra (Vice-Chair) ..... (Portugal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 57: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (A/77/12, A/77/12/Add.1 and A/77/313)**

1. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing his report (A/77/12), said that, while climate change, the lasting effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the cost-of-living crisis had all had grave consequences, the inability of the international community to prevent or resolve conflicts continued to be the biggest driver of displacement. The Russian invasion of Ukraine had led to one of the fastest displacement crises since the Second World War, forcing around 14 million people from their homes. The refugee response in Europe had been excellent and showed the kind of “whole-of-society” approach that Member States had envisaged when affirming the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018. Moreover, it had clearly contradicted the claims of politicians that Europe was full, relocation was impossible and public opinion would not support receiving refugees. The political and public support and the operational response had all proven that it was possible to receive even large numbers of refugees when there was leadership, sensible policies, good management and, above all, a shared approach.

2. The plight of the people in Ukraine was of deep concern. The continued destruction of civilian infrastructure, which should never be targeted, would only serve to exacerbate the extreme hardship endured by civilians, including those 6.2 million that were internally displaced. Although humanitarian work could mitigate some of the damage, it would always be insufficient to respond to wide-scale destruction. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had stepped up its operations, winter was a concern, with more needing to be done to ward off the cold’s worst effects. He therefore called on all Member States to lend expertise and resources to that critical effort.

3. However, the need to focus on the Ukraine crisis must not distract the international community from adequately supporting the response to other crises, as was unfortunately often the case. In Tigray, Ethiopia, violence had displaced more than 850,000 people in the first half of 2022 alone, and the situation had worsened with the recent surge in hostilities. Hundreds of thousands of people had been uprooted throughout the Sahel. In Burkina Faso, nearly 2 million people were internally displaced, with armed groups controlling a

significant amount of territory. More than 1 million people had been displaced in Myanmar since the military takeover in 2021 and no solution was in sight for the almost 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Tens of thousands of people continued to be driven from their homes by fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with little to no international attention. There were still more than 5 million Syrian refugees in Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon and other countries in the region, and complex population movements, including of people in need of international protection, were growing throughout the Americas.

4. In addition to the countless protracted displacement crises, UNHCR had responded to 37 new emergencies over the past 12 months. Wherever necessary, it had provided protection and assistance, including but not limited to shelter, non-food items and cash assistance. Together with the World Food Programme, which needed urgent additional support, UNHCR was striving to address the growing food insecurity in refugee settings. In that regard, he hoped that the Black Sea Grain Initiative could be continued as it was vital for millions of people, including refugees and displaced persons.

5. With regard to the climate emergency, extreme weather events were wreaking havoc around the world, including the recent flooding in Pakistan – a country that had hosted Afghan refugees for generations – and climate-related human suffering was being endured in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Latin America, South-East Asia and the Middle East. During his recent visit to Somalia, he had seen first-hand how the climate emergency, coupled with conflict, was leading to displacement, an increasingly common phenomenon in many already fragile States. Moreover, displacement from Somalia impacted such neighbouring countries as Kenya, which was also affected by climate change.

6. UNHCR had continued to step up its displacement-related climate response, strengthening legal and normative guidance to States, responding to actual climate-related displacement crises, building resilience to climate shocks in hosting areas and taking steps to reduce its own carbon footprint, including by switching to renewable energy where possible. UNHCR work in the Sahel was an example of how technology could be used to improve response and preparedness. However, it was clear that more needed to be done to fight the climate emergency and to help those already displaced or at risk of displacement. He trusted that Member States would take into consideration the needs of such people at the upcoming twenty-seventh session

of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

7. The cost-of-living crisis, which dramatically affected displaced and other vulnerable persons, was also precipitating further desperate measures, including, in some cases, onward movement, with some resorting to dangerous journeys at sea. Moreover, poverty robbed people, especially women and girls, of their dignity and rights. While it clearly could not influence global macroeconomic trends, UNHCR was working to offset their harshest consequences through traditional relief activities but also, increasingly, through work with such institutions as the International Monetary Fund so that they considered forced displacement as a relevant factor in planning their support to States, especially where the percentage of refugees and their economic impact was significant. In addition, UNHCR had furthered its cooperation with the World Bank, regional financial institutions and other development agencies in providing direct support to refugee-hosting countries that included refugees in their national plans. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimated that some \$3.3 billion of bilateral development funds were injected into refugee situations every year. That was in addition to the \$2 billion per year from multilateral development banks and the humanitarian resources mobilized by UNHCR and its partners. Such contributions needed to be increased, especially in the form of grants to bolster and support host countries and communities that were shouldering a disproportionate amount of the international community's responsibility for refugees.

8. Peace was naturally the best enabler of solutions. Peacebuilding must include the removal of obstacles to the return of refugees and displaced persons, which was primarily the responsibility of the country of origin, with the help of the international community. UNHCR would continue to scale up support to countries of origin whenever possible and stood ready to help facilitate solutions, especially for the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. There were, however, other options, including resettlement and complementary pathways, that needed to be expanded, and he encouraged Governments to increase targets whenever possible.

9. The international community must make education more accessible to displaced persons so that they could be prepared and have the skills to take advantage of opportunities for solutions. In addition, giving nationality to stateless persons could be a light at the end of the tunnel for millions.

10. UNHCR had raised substantial funding, especially from private donors. Contributions from individuals, foundations and companies would exceed \$1 billion; around 20 per cent of the overall income of UNHCR. New and innovative partnerships were also in place, including in the area of Islamic philanthropy. Yet the war in Ukraine had increased the budget by more than \$1 billion. While donors had continued to be generous, including an injection of \$400 million since the summer, a number of critical operations faced a shortfall of nearly \$700 million, which, if not filled, would cause severe hardship to refugees. UNHCR had not experienced that level of financial challenge for years. He therefore appealed to Member States to urgently help with additional contributions to prevent painful cuts to basic support to refugees. At the same time, UNHCR was continuing to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations, including through extensive reforms.

11. Since the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR had made substantial progress, including with multilateral development banks, financial institutions and the private sector. Furthermore, it had deepened cooperation with the sports community, academia, faith-based organizations and others. At the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, more than 1,400 pledges had been made to implement the Global Compact, and hundreds more had been made since. He encouraged all Member States to participate in and pledge at the second Forum, to be held in December 2023, to show the world that, despite the challenges, the international community could work together in support of those who had lost everything.

12. **Mr. Weinstein** (United States of America) said that, as his country remained committed to providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to the record number of forcibly displaced persons around the world, it had provided more than \$17 billion in aid in 2022, continuing its long, proud tradition of humanitarian leadership. The nearly \$2.2 billion it had provided the previous fiscal year constituted its largest ever annual contribution, a true testament to its enduring and invaluable partnership. Being supportive of UNHCR efforts to promote responsibility-sharing, his Government had expanded its refugee resettlement programme as a durable solution and encouraged others to do the same. The United States aimed to admit up to 125,000 refugees in fiscal year 2023. However, despite the measures taken, it recognized that a durable solution would remain out of reach for most refugees. The international community therefore needed to work together, including with host Governments, development actors and the private sector, to provide

protection and enable refugees and their host communities to thrive until they could access a durable solution. It was clear that the humanitarian community was struggling to respond to a growing list of protracted and emerging crises and humanitarian challenges, including the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, climate change and conflicts. The ability of UNHCR and its partners to stay and deliver assistance despite those challenges was commendable. The United States would strengthen its collaboration with UNHCR and its partners and called upon all Member States to do the same.

13. **Ms. Mendoza Elguea** (Mexico), welcoming the adoption of the UNHCR omnibus resolution, said that her country's active participation in the process had been driven by the importance it attached to promoting policies that supported the humanitarian approach. Mexico advocated for mental health and psychosocial support, international cooperation on refugees, shared responsibility, respect for human rights, gender equality and diversity and solutions that supported the mandate and work of UNHCR.

14. Reaffirming her country's support for the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework, she said that, as a complement to the framework, Mexico had consolidated the inter-agency round tables on refugees and complementary protection focusing on the coordination of relevant stakeholders in the areas of health, education, documentation and identity, and the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers in the labour market.

15. Mexico had confidence in the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and would continue its efforts for the benefit of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum-seekers, especially at a time when they continued to be disproportionately affected by the threat of food, energy, geopolitical and climate crises. In that context, she wondered how Member States and relevant stakeholders could address the recent challenges that had led to an influx of refugees.

16. **Ms. Eneström** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), said that, while many positive steps had been taken by UNHCR and States, the fact that some targets had not been met reflected its continued underfunding. As major donors, the Nordic countries called on Member States to step up their support of UNHCR and encouraged it to continue mobilizing private sector partnerships and funding.

17. The Nordic countries welcomed the robust support provided by UNHCR in combating sexual and gender-

based violence and its assistance to forcibly displaced persons needing protection because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, persons with disabilities and internally displaced persons.

18. In 2022, Sweden had had the privilege of facilitating informal consultations on the UNHCR omnibus resolution, which supported the Office's humanitarian and non-political mandate. The Nordic countries called for the adoption of the resolution by consensus in order to send a strong message of support to UNHCR and its important mandate.

19. In closing, she asked what the main prioritization criteria of UNHCR were, bearing in mind the ever-increasing needs and underfunding.

20. **Ms. del Águila Castillo** (Guatemala) reaffirmed her country's commitment to the processes aimed at achieving the commitments made in the Global Compact on Refugees and the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework.

21. In accordance with its mandate, UNHCR supported her country in strengthening its institutions so that it could continue working for the benefit of refugees, applicants for refugee status, returnees in need of international protection and host communities. In the past two years, her country had received official visits from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and from the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, who had recognized the efforts being made at the national level to provide the support required by people in need of protection and to deliver comprehensive responses to the challenge of human mobility. UNHCR was a strategic partner and ally for the Guatemalan institutions responsible for refugee and humanitarian assistance. Guatemala also recognized the important contribution made to host communities by refugees and applicants for refugee status through initiatives that generated opportunities for decent work and the provision of sustainable livelihoods in an environment of inclusion and equality.

22. **Mr. Greco** (Italy) said that his country was very concerned about the rising number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide as a result of the multiplying, overlapping humanitarian crises driven by conflicts and climate change, which were amplifying instability, inequality and food insecurity globally. Italy was particularly worried about the number of internally displaced persons and refugees as a result of the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the effects of which had deeply exacerbated existing socioeconomic inequalities, with the greatest impact on the most vulnerable groups in the global South. Greatly concerned by the recent suspension of the Black Sea

Grain Initiative, Italy urged the Russian Federation to promptly apply and extend that crucial agreement. Special attention should also be paid to the humanitarian emergency in the Horn of Africa, where the compounding direct and indirect effects of regional conflicts and the aggression against Ukraine were displacing millions of people within and across borders.

23. In closing, he asked how to ensure the effective fulfilment of the rights and needs of the most vulnerable, including women and children, while strengthening the capacity of the local authorities of transit countries engaged in border management.

24. **Mr. Tremenbert** (France) said that his country was fulfilling the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 and would co-host the second Forum in 2023. France would promote legal channels for migration, including through the resettlement programmes that it had continued to implement despite the health crisis in Egypt, Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, the Niger and Chad and that it had developed in Rwanda, Cameroon and Ethiopia since the summer of 2020, positioning France as the sixth largest resettlement actor in the world at the end of 2021.

25. The commitment of France to the protection of refugees was illustrated by the increase in its voluntary contributions to UNHCR, which would exceed \$100 million in 2021, making it the eighth largest governmental donor. In addition, France had shown great solidarity with Ukrainian refugees, more than 100,000 of whom had been received on its territory under temporary protection. Lastly, in 2022–2023 France was co-chairing the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which would focus on climate change, the impact of which on population displacement was undeniable.

26. **Mr. Szczerski** (Poland) said that, as mentioned in the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Russian military aggression against Ukraine had caused the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. The Government of Poland had introduced exceptional measures for displaced persons from Ukraine, who lived in Poland in an open environment as opposed to refugee camps or restricted refugee centres. A simplified border-crossing procedure and additional traffic connections had been established and shelter, care and protection had been provided to some 2 million forcibly displaced persons. In addition, his Government had opened up the country's labour market to Ukrainian citizens and had established financial and social support mechanisms, thereby guaranteeing access to the education system and the public health-care system for all Ukrainian refugees

under the same terms as Polish citizens. Poland would continue its relentless efforts to support Ukraine and its people and, to that end, was ready to work constructively with international organizations and in close partnership with UNHCR and to share its experience and lessons learned with other countries.

27. **Mr. Rae** (Canada) said that the need to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity had never been greater. The innovative work of UNHCR was crucial, especially in the areas of cash assistance, livelihood opportunities and economic inclusion, as was its engagement with international financial institutions and multilateral development banks. In that context, it was more important than ever that States remained committed to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

28. The generosity that had been shown to Ukrainian refugees in the way that they had been respected, given agency and the right to work, education and inclusion, and the way in which local populations had been mobilized to include them, should no longer be viewed as an exceptional approach, but should serve as a basis for the treatment of refugees around the world.

29. **Mr. Al-Suwaidi** (Qatar) said that his Government continued to cooperate with UNHCR to meet the growing humanitarian need created by forced displacement. Qatar had contributed \$8 million to the core budget of UNHCR for the period 2021–2022, and the Qatar Fund for Development had donated generously to UNHCR emergency relief programmes for Afghanistan. The Generation Amazing foundation, a human and social legacy programme launched as part of the Qatar 2022 Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup, had collaborated with UNHCR and Education Above All to develop the soccer-themed “Football 4 Development Playbook” toolkit in support of refugee children worldwide.

30. **Mr. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that, in view of the tragic milestone of more than 100 million people forcibly displaced around the world, it was more important than ever for States to uphold the international legal instruments and principles on the rights of refugees. Liechtenstein attached particular importance to the principle of non-refoulement, which had been subjected to increasing attacks in recent years. In that regard, he wished to know more about the applications and violations of that principle during the current refugee crises and how respect for the principle could be strengthened further.

31. **Mr. Hassan** (Egypt) said that his country shared the concern of the international community about the growing numbers of displaced persons as a result of

armed conflicts, humanitarian crises and the adverse effects of climate change. It was further concerned about the current state of global food insecurity, which left millions at risk of famine, especially in developing countries. Despite increasing pressure, Egypt continued to host more than 290,000 refugees and some 9 million migrants and people in refugee-like conditions from over 60 countries, who lived in the country freely, not in camps or closed centres, in accordance with their right to free movement. Moreover, they were provided basic services, such as education and health care, on an equal basis.

32. Noting that a limited number of low- and middle-income countries bore a disproportionate responsibility for hosting the growing number of refugees, he wished to hear the best methods for attaining more equitable, predictable and sustainable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all Member States, in accordance with the Global Compact on Refugees, and for ensuring that refugees were provided with adequate services while guaranteeing the resilience of host communities.

33. **Mr. Abdullah** (Bangladesh) said that, as the host of more than 1 million Rohingyas, Bangladesh recognized the critical support of UNHCR in providing humanitarian assistance to the huge population in the country's camps. In his report entitled "Our Common Agenda", the Secretary-General had called for legal identity for all, an end to statelessness and protection of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants. In that context, he wished to know how States could realize that important call and how the upcoming intergovernmental processes, such as the Sustainable Development Goals Summit and Summit of the Future, could be used to ensure a dignified life for displaced persons.

34. In the camps in Cox's Bazar, the risks faced by the Rohingya population had been compounded by the climate vulnerability of the area. In that regard, he asked how UNHCR planned to support countries in dealing with the additional challenges to hosting refugees posed by climate change.

35. **Ms. González López** (El Salvador) said that, as a country of origin, transit, destination and return, El Salvador had allocated significant funds to guarantee the rights of migrants, refugees and applicants for refugee status in the country. That was highly relevant because funding was key to fulfilling the rights of refugees and migrants who so desperately needed it. Aware that the dynamics of migration and increasing migratory flows demanded direct assistance to migrants to guarantee their protection and to prevent and combat smuggling and trafficking in persons, her Government

was making great efforts to guarantee international protection. However, it was important to recognize that the institutional capacities in place were sometimes limited. Despite the significant investment made by her Government, El Salvador required the permanent support of international organizations and all relevant stakeholders, including UNHCR. In closing, she stressed the need to join efforts and to have greater international solidarity in addressing the crisis.

36. **Mr. Venancio Guerra** (Portugal) said that the principles and provisions of international humanitarian law were clear and non-negotiable: all those fleeing persecution, war or disaster had the right to seek asylum and must be given refuge. Portugal remained actively engaged in a variety of international solidarity mechanisms with the aim of building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless persons. In particular, it would keep collaborating on resettlement, namely with the UNHCR office in Lisbon, in order to bring around 300 refugees to Portugal per year and would work together on the Sustainable Resettlement and Complementary Pathways Initiative.

37. His delegation welcomed the adoption by the UNHCR Executive Committee of the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support, which was a subject of utmost importance to his country. In addition, it called on all States to implement the Global Compact on Refugees and to take tangible measures to eradicate statelessness.

38. Portugal was deeply committed to raising the global percentage of refugees that had access to higher education from 5 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030. In that regard, he asked how that goal could be mainstreamed in the global education agenda and how synergies could be found with such initiatives as the Transforming Education Summit or the Summit of the Future.

39. **Ms. Mrad** (Lebanon) said that her delegation agreed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that one conflict in one corner of the world should not prevent the international community from devoting equal attention to other, long-standing conflicts and their spillover effects. As a host to thousands of Syrian and Palestinian refugees, Lebanon had recently resumed voluntary repatriations after they had been put on hold following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Her country believed that it was timely for the international community to reconsider providing life-saving services that offered basic support to refugees in host countries. Moreover, the international community and its financial partners should undertake joint efforts to devise a clear road map promoting voluntary repatriation with a focus on early

recovery, international cooperation in countries of origin and the creation of incentives and job opportunities in a forward-looking, cost-effective approach.

40. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that, as a host country, Algeria was keen to fulfil its obligations and assume its share of the burden. While it was well known that the majority of refugees and internally displaced persons were located in developing countries that had been struggling to provide them with access to basic services even before the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR reports still did not address the impact of the presence of refugees on host countries and communities, nor particularly emphasize the role of donor countries. Algeria therefore once again requested UNHCR to conduct a study on the economic and social impact of refugees on host countries, especially those that hosted a large number of refugees for a long time. Owing to the impact of the pandemic and the economic crisis, especially food insecurity, some recipient countries had requested assistance from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in caring for refugees. Unfortunately, not all of the requests had been accommodated. His delegation therefore wished to know more about the coordination between UNHCR and OCHA.

41. The response to internally displaced persons was an integral part of the work of UNHCR, and there was a tendency within the United Nations system to give more importance to that group. In that context, he wished to know what the relationship was between UNHCR and the Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement and how the inception of that Office had added value to the work of UNHCR on the ground.

42. **Mr. Kurniawan** (Indonesia) said that the international community needed to step up its humanitarian efforts and increase international support to address the refugee crisis, including by offering international protection to refugees. For its part, Indonesia had upheld the non-refoulement principle by rescuing Rohingya refugees even when many countries had implemented “pushback” policies. In that connection, he welcomed the reference in paragraph 23 of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to good practices in Indonesia, where operating procedures were in place for rescuing refugees.

43. Countries needed to address the link between refugees and transnational crime, including the risk of inhumane treatment, trafficking and exploitation posed by sea migration. Furthermore, States should apply the

principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing, and States parties to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and its 1967 Protocol should realize their commitments and obligations in that regard.

44. **Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) said that his delegation was greatly concerned that over 100 million people had been forced from their homes and believed that it was imperative for the international community to strengthen its crisis prevention efforts worldwide. Switzerland had mobilized an additional \$80 million for emergency aid in Ukraine without cutting activities in other areas and called on other donor States to do the same.

45. Given the worrying increase in trafficking in persons, it was important that victims of crises received material and psychological as well as police and legal assistance and protection. All States should therefore comply with international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights. In that context, it was crucial that UNHCR had secure and unhindered access to all persons on the move wherever its services were needed.

46. The current situation called for increased commitments from all stakeholders and the systematic integration of a triple nexus approach. As co-host of the next Global Refugee Forum, Switzerland was ready to support UNHCR in the pursuit of that objective and wished to know how equitable and effective burden- and responsibility-sharing could be achieved for refugees and internally displaced persons.

47. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that her delegation shared the concerns expressed regarding the increased number of people displaced from their homes worldwide, which corresponded to an alarming global protection crisis. The serious human suffering and forced displacement as a result of ongoing crises around the world remained an urgent concern. Countries that hosted the influx of displaced persons needed meaningful solidarity in line with the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing, as low- and middle-income countries continued hosting the overwhelming majority of the world’s refugee population. Furthermore, the international community should step up collective efforts to address the root causes of forced displacement and achieve a durable solution, take more responsibility to reverse the current trends, bring displacement levels down and adopt preventive approaches. As a host to the world’s largest refugee population, Türkiye would continue to underline the collective responsibility of the international community to safeguard the rights of people on the move who were escaping persecution or searching for a better life in line

with the core tenets of human dignity. In closing, she asked how the international community could maintain the momentum achieved at the first Global Refugee Forum.

48. **Mr. Lamce** (Albania) said that the unjustified and unlawful Russian aggression against Ukraine had caused the largest and fastest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War, as a result of which 7.7 million Ukrainians had been forced to leave their country. All those displaced, especially women and girls, were at a heightened risk of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. Albania commended the work of UNHCR in addressing gender-based violence and scaling up the responses to the increasing protection needs of refugees. Local civil society organizations, women and human rights defenders at the grass-roots level must be included in the response and efforts to prevent, document and address cases of conflict-related sexual violence, gender-based violence, trafficking and exploitation. In that context, he wished to know what could be done to improve the monitoring of refugees, especially in cross-border regions.

49. **Ms. Babedi** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group was gravely concerned about the rising number of refugees and displaced persons in various parts of the African continent. It emphasized the need to develop a holistic approach to addressing large population movements that took into account the underlying causes of displacement. The African continent was home to more than one third of the world's forcibly displaced persons. In that context, the Group appreciated the work that UNHCR had undertaken across Africa to ensure that displaced persons had access to protection and asylum, provide life-saving assistance and reduce and prevent statelessness.

50. The Group reaffirmed the importance of the Global Compact on Refugees and recognized the centrality of the principle of international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing. However, the fact that several national humanitarian programmes remained substantially underfunded was of concern. It was therefore crucial that the global burden- and responsibility-sharing mechanism be implemented to find durable solutions. Welcoming the progress reports that had been received for more than half of all pledges made, she asked what more could be done to ensure that the pledges made by States were realized.

51. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that, as a result of decades of internal conflict and the military's atrocities following its illegal coup in February 2021, a great

number of citizens of Myanmar had migrated to other countries. Those individuals found themselves in seriously precarious situations, risking death, torture and arrest in Myanmar and arrest and deportation in neighbouring countries. Many of them suffered mental and physical trauma and remained concerned for their health and safety and thus required urgent assistance and protection. However, if such help was not received in time, they were likely to become victims of trafficking or sexual exploitation, which was of great concern. Unfortunately, some Myanmar nationals who had fled to neighbouring countries and sought protection from UNHCR had been deported, despite their risk of arrest on return to Myanmar. Transparency was vital in that regard.

52. **Mr. Khani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as a main host of refugees, Iran was concerned that the overall situation in the world could cause new waves of displacement. Since 2021, thousands of Afghans had been entering Iran on a daily basis. Neighbours of Afghanistan, including Iran, should not shoulder all the burdens associated with receiving Afghan refugees, however. In that context, the principle of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing should be fully respected. Moreover, it was imperative to recognize and address the challenges faced by the countries with the largest number of refugees, including Iran. The infrastructure of host communities was heavily overloaded. The situation in Iran was exacerbated by unilateral coercive measures and insufficient international assistance. Indeed, it was estimated that international resources covered only 4 per cent to 6 per cent of the living costs of refugees in Iran. The low rate of voluntary repatriations in recent years was also cause for alarm. In the light of the above, he enquired how the impact and cost of hosting refugees could be effectively measured with a view to ensuring fair, equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

53. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) asked what lessons the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had drawn from his collaboration with the International Organization for Migration on both internal displacement and mixed migratory movements; what strategy had been put in place by UNHCR to ensure access to education for refugee children, including through new information and communication technologies; how States could take advantage of international cooperation in refugee management, particularly in the area of official development assistance, to strengthen the link between humanitarian and development issues, including through refugees' access to economic opportunities; and how the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and



Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods could be useful to UNHCR in addressing the problem of displacement in Africa.

54. **Mr. Parga Cintra** (Brazil) said that Brazil had recently promoted an exhibition on Operation Welcome at United Nations Headquarters. Under the initiative, government branches, international agencies, including UNHCR, and national and international civil society organizations came together to provide shelter, immunization, protection, full documentation and interiorization, preparing refugees for integration into Brazilian society. However, while his country's humanitarian response was well-established, it was not fully sustainable. Some \$400 million had been spent on setting up the initiative since 2018, and a further \$50 million was allocated from the national budget annually. In that context, the Quito Process – a regional informal coordination mechanism – had facilitated the exchange of best practices and coordination of initiatives, which had consolidated the Latin American and Caribbean region as a space of solidarity and inclusion. Brazil had had the honour of presiding over the Quito Process and had recently hosted its eighth plenary meeting.

55. **Ms. Nyirongo** (Malawi) said that the 56,486 refugees and asylum-seekers registered in Malawi as of September 2022 lived in the Dzaleka refugee camp, which had initially been designed to accommodate just 10,000 to 12,000 people. Moreover, her country continued to receive 400 individuals per month on average. Severe overcrowding at the camp had given rise to the rapid spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19, resulting in an increased risk of infection and death. Malawi had worked closely with UNHCR for years to ensure that refugees received protection and access to education, health care, food, shelter and employment opportunities. However, some refugees participated in unlawful activities and thus were a threat to the security of local communities. She therefore wished to know how Member States could deal with such issues without violating the rights of the refugees concerned.

56. **Ms. Ukaeje** (Nigeria) said that her delegation noted with dismay that the number of displaced persons impacted by conflict, violence and climate change in Africa had exceeded 38 million. The adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, food insecurity, rising energy and food prices required a global response that adequately addressed those challenges and simultaneously sought solutions to the plight of refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons. It was therefore imperative for burden- and responsibility sharing to remain at the

centre of the discourse on refugees. Nigeria recalled the African Union Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in May 2022, and the commitment of States to address the root causes of the humanitarian challenges in Africa to achieve the objectives of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. Believing that African challenges required home-grown African solutions, Nigeria called on UNHCR and the international community to integrate the priorities of African States into the provision of assistance and durable solutions to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the region.

57. **Ms. Bouzid** (Morocco) said that her country welcomed the pledges, contributions and commitments made at the meeting of high-level officials on the Global Compact on Refugees in December 2021 and encouraged the sustained engagement of Member States and other relevant stakeholders in the fulfilment of the pledges in the review process. In that regard, she would like to hear an assessment of the general implementation of the Global Compact and the level of commitment by all relevant stakeholders. Noting that civil registration and documentation had helped UNHCR in several countries, she wished to know how UNHCR intended to further generalize such measures to cover all situations, including through the use of biometric registration. All donors should strengthen their support through flexible funding and early contributions. Furthermore, UNHCR should redouble its efforts to ensure that humanitarian assistance reached beneficiaries and should also implement accountability tools that would help to counter the systemic organized embezzlement and misappropriation of international humanitarian aid.

58. **Mr. McGuire** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that caring for refugees went further than just accepting them into a new location; States' mission of service should extend to the humanely managed assimilation of refugees into society. Efforts towards refugee assistance were not limited to United Nations agencies or intergovernmental organizations – any government, organization or person was capable of aiding their suffering fellow humans. The focus should be on community engagement where support could be given most effectively, both financially and in terms of recognizing the most pressing needs, not to mention the fact that the foundations of a relationship could be created between local inhabitants and new refugees.

59. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he fully agreed with the representative of Canada that the treatment of Ukrainian refugees in Europe should serve as a baseline for the way refugees were treated in general. There were already good examples of that approach, such as the

provision of temporary protection in Colombia and regularization programmes for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and other countries of the region. He wished to assure those representatives that had referred to the protection of vulnerable groups that UNHCR would continue to pay the utmost attention to such groups and prioritize activities related to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse. It would also pay greater attention to mental health.

60. With regard to education, he recalled that, at the recent Transforming Education Summit in New York, he had underlined that care needed to be taken to ensure that the gains made in ensuring access to education for refugees and displaced persons were not lost as a result of economic or social pressure, the COVID-19 pandemic or the multiple current crises.

61. Responding to the representative of Liechtenstein, he said that non-refoulement remained the cardinal principal on which the activities of UNHCR to protect refugees were founded. Unfortunately, refoulement continued to exist all over the world, and UNHCR would continue to raise such issues both privately and publicly whenever necessary.

62. With regard to the situation of refugees from Myanmar, he agreed that they still required protection and that their deportation should be avoided. Moreover, the international community must not forget the plight of the Rohingya refugees that had fled from Myanmar even before the military takeover. A solution needed to be found to that as yet unresolved situation.

63. In response to the representative of Morocco, he said that the issue of registration and documentation was a complex one that had different applications in different parts of the world. That said, wherever it was feasible, appropriate technology could be used to ensure that refugees were documented and identified, which was their right.

64. With regard to the question raised by the representative of Malawi concerning refugees that posed a threat to security, he said that no refugee had the right to threaten the security of the State hosting them and they should be dealt with according to the law. However, care needed to be taken not to conflate movements of people with threats to security.

65. Concerning the issue of burden- and responsibility-sharing, he said that both principles were the foundation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Similarly, the Global Refugee Forum was a tool for implementing measures that ensured as much responsibility-sharing as possible. While burden- and

responsibility-sharing had not been achieved at the first Forum, steps had been made in that direction. Work therefore needed to continue, which was why the Forum would be held every four years. In that context, he called on Member States to match pledges as much as possible as an important means of burden-sharing.

66. Responding to the question from the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding how the impact of refugees could be effectively measured, he said the tools developed by UNHCR in recent years in cooperation with development institutions, such as the joint data bank with the World Bank, could be used for that purpose. Moreover, attention needed to be paid not just to countries of origin and first asylum but to transit countries, because strengthening their capacity to deal with refugee flows could actually reduce the exposure of people on the move to traffickers and other risks.

67. In response to the representative of Cameroon, he said that UNHCR was cooperating closely with the International Organization for Migration. In fact, both organizations had recently signed a new framework for cooperation setting out the division of labour, and joint work was often carried out in Latin America, Libya, Bangladesh and other places.

68. He agreed with the representative of Lebanon that, despite difficult circumstances, States should not be prevented from conducting repatriations provided that they were voluntary, dignified and supported. Resettlement was also important. With regard to statelessness, he said that he would continue the I Belong campaign launched by his predecessor until the end of 2024. He was glad that fighting statelessness was an important point in the common agenda, and measures in that regard needed to be accelerated.

69. Turning to internal displacement, he said that UNHCR was cooperating closely with the Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement and had put itself forward as a key agency to help resident coordinators in various countries to address the issue. Highlighting the importance of such international cooperation forums as the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework and the Quito Process, he called on all Member States to create regional platforms because population movements needed to be dealt with on a regional basis and not just State by State.

70. He congratulated Sweden for leading the omnibus resolution and echoed the appeal by the Nordic countries for States to adopt the resolution by consensus, as it was necessary to show those people that were suffering that the international community was

trying to solve their plight, since it was a humanitarian issue, not a political one.

71. Lastly, in response to the question raised by the representative of Albania, he said that, as a frontline organization, it was a core responsibility of UNHCR, not so much to monitor, but to be present where people were in need of international protection and solutions, and he thanked all Member States for their support in that regard.

72. **Mr. Gonzato** (Representative of the European Union, in its capacity as observer) said that the European Union and its member States shared the deep concern about the continuously rising number of forcibly displaced persons around the world owing to conflicts, climate change and food insecurity, and were grateful to the Governments and host communities that had generously taken in forcibly displaced persons, showing true solidarity.

73. It had been a record year, with more than 100 million displaced persons at the end of May 2022, including nearly 1 million Somalis in the Horn of Africa and 4.5 million people in South Sudan. Moreover, 13 million people had been displaced by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, triggering the worst refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. The European Union and its member States remained fully mobilized in addressing the consequences of protracted and emerging crises across the world wherever conflicts and disasters drove displacement. They were committed to doing their part by contributing to greater international burden- and responsibility-sharing and helping persons of concern in third countries. Together with its member States, the European Union remained a leading donor in supporting emergency response, bringing together humanitarian and development efforts in line with its policy on displacement.

74. The European Union and its member States welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to ensure the implementation of pledges made at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019 and looked forward to the second Forum in 2023, which would provide an opportunity for participating States to further strengthen global solidarity and responsibility-sharing in a true spirit of partnership, including with refugees and refugee-led organizations. It would also offer an opportunity for UNHCR to further mobilize development actors and international financial institutions in order to work towards more durable solutions.

75. Access to health care, especially mental health care, for forcibly displaced and stateless persons remained a significant challenge. In that regard, the

UNHCR Executive Committee conclusion adopted in 2022 would serve as an important framework for UNHCR and its partners to continue their crucial work on mental health and psychosocial services.

76. The engagement of UNHCR in situations of internal displacement in 33 countries in 2022 was commendable. In that regard, the European Union and its member States welcomed the launch of the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and called on all stakeholders to engage fully in supporting its implementation.

77. **Mr. Pérez Ayestarán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that the Group attached particular importance to the mandate of UNHCR given that the global political, economic, social and environmental dynamics of recent decades had triggered major emergencies requiring international protection for thousands of people forced to flee their places of origin for reasons beyond their control. In that context, and in the light of the gravity of the situation on the ground, the Group called for the urgent adoption of measures to provide international protection for the heroic Palestinian people, who had endured years of brutal aggression, at least until the prevailing cycle of impunity was broken and those responsible for heinous crimes were brought to international justice.

78. The best guarantee for ensuring sustained progress towards a more peaceful and secure world, in which development and human rights were a reality, was full adherence to the spirit in which the United Nations had been established, as clearly enshrined in the purposes and principles of its founding Charter, including the promotion of friendly and cooperative relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights, self-determination and the resolution of disputes through dialogue. Those political foundations, however, were being increasingly threatened by the advent of unilateralist tendencies that progressively sought to undermine the effectiveness of multilateralism as the best way of addressing major global challenges and threats, which, in many cases, were common to all.

79. The Group considered unilateralism, extremism, exceptionalism and foreign interventionism to be one of the main sources of the global crises that led to massive human displacement around the world, with political instability in some regions of the world being the primary cause. In many cases, moreover, such displacement was motivated by economic interests. At no point was consideration given to the negative impact of such approaches on the human rights of the

population subjected to such violations, including on the most vulnerable. The political, economic and social impact of the systematic campaign of unilateral coercive measures against entire peoples, in contravention of all norms of international law, represented the most sophisticated cause of global human displacement emergencies, depriving more than one third of humanity of the full enjoyment and realization of their human rights, undermining the economies of the countries subject to those criminal measures and even hampering national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

80. Human action based on a model of unequal economic accumulation and exploitation of resources had exacerbated the current climate catastrophe and triggered natural phenomena of atypical proportions, including floods, heat and cold waves, hurricanes and other unprecedented disasters, including in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Unfortunately, those circumstances also gave rise to mobility crises that must be addressed through solidarity and cooperation, on the basis of a global, coherent and concerted response and within the framework of effective and inclusive multilateralism, for which the Group reaffirmed its full support and in which the United Nations was called upon to play a central role.

81. The Group underlined that, to ensure the success of its mandate, UNHCR should fully adhere to the guiding principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and operational independence, as defined in General Assembly resolution [46/182](#). It was only through full coordination and national ownership, in a context of maximum transparency, that UNHCR activities would have the necessary legitimacy to avoid any risk of being politically exploited by external actors, which would ultimately only undermine trust and call into question the credibility of the United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds.

82. The Group emphasized that the assistance provided by the United Nations in the context of humanitarian emergencies constituted one of the Organization's most critical tasks, both because of the great demand for financial resources and because of the technical expertise and high-risk operational capacity it required on the ground, which also made it particularly politically and socially sensitive. The Group therefore urged all parties involved to fulfil their functions and operate in strict compliance with the relevant national and international legislation and prevent their work from being misused for economic or commercial advantage by some sectors interested not only in profiting from human tragedies but also in prolonging

them indefinitely; an immoral practice that the Group strongly condemned.

83. Lastly, speaking in his national capacity, he called on the international community to avoid politicizing the concept of refuge and attempts to deliberately confuse migrants with refugees, let alone displaced persons, which had the potential to open the door for States to fail to comply with their respective obligations in that area.

84. **Mr. Alwasil** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, said that their delegations remained committed to assisting refugees, in line with the humanitarian principles set forth in the relevant international instruments, as well as in the true Islamic faith, whose integral tenets included fraternity, charity and tolerance. With more than 100 million refugees and displaced persons worldwide, all available means should be harnessed to provide them with relief, health care and social assistance. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries were among the largest donors to UNHCR, contributing humanitarian and development assistance to help improve living conditions. The international community must join forces to protect refugees fleeing wars and other disasters, particularly during the ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

85. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries stood with all those who helped alleviate the suffering of refugees and looked forward to a day when peace would reign and refugees could return voluntarily to their countries.

86. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation appreciated the effective work carried out by UNHCR as the leading international body for addressing forced migration issues. Russia was committed to upholding its international obligations towards refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Reducing statelessness remained a key focus of his Government's migration policy, and the number of stateless persons in Russia was steadily decreasing. His Government would continue to support UNHCR efforts to address statelessness. His country had supported the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees and had participated actively in the meeting of high-level officials on the Global Compact in December 2021.

87. Since February 2022, more than 4.5 million people had arrived in Russia from the Donetsk People's Republic, the Luhansk People's Republic, Kherson Province and Zaporizhzhia Province and from Ukraine.

All those people had come to his country voluntarily to save themselves and their families from the shelling and persecution carried out by the nationalist Kyiv regime. Russia was making every effort to welcome and accommodate those people and to provide them with comprehensive assistance, including in the areas of employment, education, social benefits and free medical care. Procedures for obtaining legal status in the Russian Federation had been simplified. Employees of the UNHCR office in Moscow, who regularly visited temporary housing centres for internally displaced persons in various Russian regions, had noted the effectiveness of the efforts being made to ensure decent living conditions for those people.

88. Efforts to promote the voluntary return of Syrian refugees must continue. The Russian initiative to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Syrian forced migrants remained relevant. The international community should take a non-politicized approach to those efforts. Promoting favourable conditions for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of permanent residence was an absolute priority and an important step towards achieving long-term stabilization in Syria.

89. **Mr. Hassan** (Egypt) said that Egypt continued to host approximately 300,000 refugees and 9 million migrants and persons in refugee-like situations hailing from 60 States. As part of his country's unified refugee policy, refugees and asylum-seekers received protection and access to public services, including health care and education, on an equal footing with Egyptian citizens. They were also guaranteed freedom of movement and were not confined to refugee camps. The Government of Egypt had included migrants and refugees in the country in the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign and in the President's 100 Million Healthy Lives campaign.

90. In cooperation with the United Nations Resident Coordinator to Egypt and United Nations agencies and development partners, his Government had launched the Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees in 2021 to mobilize resources in order to enhance social inclusion and cohesion while building the capacity of host communities.

91. Cooperation between Egypt and UNHCR dated back seven decades to the accession by Egypt to the 1951 Convention, whose Protocol it had signed in 1967. Egypt had also participated in consultations leading to the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and had acceded to the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018.

92. There was a clear need to step up support for host countries and communities. Low- and middle-income

countries hosted the majority of the world's refugees, bearing the brunt of the burden without adequate support to overcome the attendant challenges. More equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing would contribute to finding a lasting solution to displacement. The alarming decline in funding for UNHCR imperilled the sustainability of its operations, requiring the international community to increase its financial support for UNHCR.

93. Egypt continued efforts to promote political solutions to regional crises, as protracted conflicts led to an increase in displacement and hindered sustainable development. Egypt, which hosted the African Union Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development, was determined to address the root causes of forced displacement. In closing, Egypt would continue to support efforts to end conflicts, alleviate humanitarian suffering and promote peace, stability and sustainable development.

94. **Mr. Wang Lixn** (China) said that the dire global refugee situation posed many new challenges to security and development. For that reason, the international community should unite to address the issue and tackle its root causes, including inadequate and uneven development and poverty, and create the conditions for refugees to return to their homes.

95. All countries should promote the universal values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom, adhere to the Charter of the United Nations and settle differences through dialogue and consultation. They should also support the coordinating role of the United Nations and such multilateral agencies as UNHCR in resolving refugee issues and providing humanitarian assistance, strive to mobilize resources, strengthen international cooperation and take practical action to implement the Global Compact on Refugees. Moreover, States should help refugees cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the accessibility and affordability of the vaccine. Developed countries should fulfil their aid commitments, support developing countries, in particular refugee-hosting countries, in their pandemic response, and integrate refugees into their national development, pandemic response and economic recovery plans. For its part, China actively supported developing countries in their pandemic response through global development assistance and the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation.

96. **Mr. Buop** (Kenya) said that his delegation noted with concern that the global refugee population under the care of UNHCR had increased to 94.7 million in 2021 as a result of protracted armed conflicts, the

lingering effects of COVID-19, economic crises and the effects of climate change. The fact that 83 per cent of refugees globally were being hosted by low- and middle-income countries was also a worrying trend. Kenya would continue to uphold its commitments under the 1951 Convention and was committed to rules-based multilateralism and international solidarity and understanding. It would continue to call for burden- and responsibility-sharing in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and was committed to fulfilling the Compact's four main objectives: easing pressures on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

97. Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to upholding the principles of international refugee protection through the implementation of international, regional and domestic policy documents. The Refugee Act had entered into force in February 2022, which strengthened the management of refugees in Kenya by consolidating provisions of several international legal instruments. Since independence, Kenya had hosted large numbers of refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries. Although progress had been made, host countries, particularly those in socioeconomically and ecologically fragile situations, still faced challenges, including lack of budgetary support to cater for refugees, overexploitation of scarce resources, acute environmental degradation, stress on the livelihoods of host communities and, in some cases, conflict between host communities and refugees, and exploitation of refugee camps to recruit for, plan and execute terrorist attacks.

98. The most effective way of dealing with the refugee problem was to address the root causes of conflict and forced displacement, promote peace and security, support efforts to alleviate poverty, reduce disaster risks and provide humanitarian and development assistance to countries of origin and host countries. Concerted efforts were needed to accord basic rights to refugees and displaced persons within the confines of national law. In addition, it was crucial to reinforce the tenet that encampment was not permanent but preparation for suitable conditions for resettlement once peace and normalcy were restored. As the number of refugees continued to rise, it was imperative for the international community to honour its international obligations and collectively support refugees, host countries and countries of origin and work with all other relevant stakeholders in protecting, assisting and repatriating refugees.

99. **Ms. Moruke** (South Africa) said that her delegation was saddened by the fact that the number of refugees and displaced persons around the world had reached 100 million – a figure that should compel the international community to do better and commit to resolving the root causes of forced displacement. Concerned by the low levels of returns to countries of origin, South Africa urged UNHCR and the international community to intensify their discussion of the impediments to increased resettlement and voluntary returns as the most durable and sustainable solution. South Africa commended UNHCR for forging cooperation with Member States and other stakeholders to assist with the voluntary repatriation of persons not in need of international protection, which was a problem that undermined the credibility of the asylum system and prevented those who were deserving of international protection from receiving it. South Africa had launched its backlog project to address that challenge.

100. In South Africa, refugees were integrated into society and had access to basic rights, including education, health care and access to justice. They were expected to be self-reliant through economic inclusion into communities that were also poor, had high competition for employment and high rates of inequality. As such, increased competition for limited resources resulted in the unintended consequence of social tension within society. More integrated and collaborative efforts from UNHCR and the international community would be appreciated to prevent such problems.

101. Concerned by the increasing displacement of persons as a result of the impact of climate change around the world, especially in the African region, South Africa supported the efforts of UNHCR to respond to climate emergencies in cooperation with the countries concerned by building local and national adaptive capacities and strengthening resilience to prevent, prepare for and respond to the displacement of persons. In closing, she called for greater collaboration at the local, regional and global levels to safeguard the lives of those forced to leave their homes.

102. **Ms. Zalabata Torres** (Colombia) said that, while her delegation welcomed the achievements made in refugee protection, it was not time to slow down. Colombia would not cease in its efforts to strengthen the institutional capacities that facilitated the socioeconomic integration of refugees. To that end, it applied a differential approach that sought to ensure the effective enjoyment by refugees of their rights and eliminate the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination they faced. Institutional frameworks must allow for their needs to be comprehensively

addressed, with the understanding that crises did not affect everyone in the same way. In that regard, her Government was developing public policies aimed at providing more and better pedagogy, coverage and quality of care in terms of education, health, work and other basic rights.

103. Colombia was committed to implementing its international commitments and determined to enhance international forums and instruments in the area. The strengthening of channels of communication between States, international organizations and other relevant stakeholders would help to improve the response to population flows. In that regard, Colombia was pleased to be co-hosting the next Global Refugee Forum, which represented a valuable opportunity to take stock of progress, challenges and new opportunities in the search for a comprehensive response to applicants for refugee status, refugees, host communities and other persons of concern, including sharing good practices and making new commitments aimed at alleviating pressures on host countries and developing refugee self-reliance.

104. Colombia was concerned about the increasing number of migrants and refugees crossing the Darién Gap, some of whom were vulnerable, including pregnant women, children and older persons. It was imperative to seek durable and sustainable solutions and develop strategies that structurally addressed the causes of displacement in unsafe conditions and that resulted in vulnerabilities that could give rise to human rights violations. While humanitarian assistance and road maps for handling such situations were vital, all States were obligated to protect migrants and refugees under the principle of shared responsibility. Such protection must go hand in hand with integration into host communities, which allowed for socioeconomic inclusion and access to basic services. That work could not be carried out unilaterally; the challenges highlighted by the current situation served as a reminder that international solidarity was essential.

105. **Ms. Mrad** (Lebanon) said that the Syrian conflict and the ensuing displacement crisis had taken a heavy toll on the region in general and on the domestic situation in Lebanon in particular. Ravaged by the most severe economic and financial crisis in its modern history, Lebanon nevertheless continued to host refugees. The 2.8 million Syrians presently in Lebanon accounted for more than half of the overall population.

106. The tensions sparked by the adverse financial, economic, social, environmental and security impacts of the Syrian displacement crisis on Lebanon had turned the country into a ticking time bomb. The recent cholera epidemic had had grave environmental and health

repercussions, and competition for employment opportunities had further exacerbated tensions and sparked security incidents. Despite the efforts of the Lebanese authorities, influxes of illegal migrants continued to travel to Europe through Lebanon. Some 42 per cent of inmates in Lebanese prisons were displaced Syrians, exacerbating overcrowding in penitentiary facilities.

107. Facilitating the return of displaced Syrians was a duty owed to the Syrian people, who were on the verge of losing their land and civilization. Under the supervision of the General Security Directorate, voluntary return trips for Syrian refugees had resumed the previous week, following the COVID-19-related suspension of those trips in 2020. Return trips were strictly voluntary, never forced, and only for persons who had expressed a desire to return by registering at 1 of the 17 centres established for that purpose. Since 1948, Lebanon had not expelled a single refugee from its territory, upholding the principle of non-refoulement despite not being a party to the 1951 Convention.

108. Lebanon vehemently rejected any form of settlement or integration of refugees, in line with the Constitution of Lebanon. Only redoubled efforts on the part of all stakeholders, in particular the international community and financial partners, would lead to the desired outcomes. Efforts to provide Syrian refugees with life-saving services in Lebanon should be redirected to providing incentives to return to Syria by focusing on development programmes in that country, in turn generating employment opportunities that would attract returnees. Given the dire state of the displacement crisis and the host society, a business-as-usual approach to the question of Syrian displacement would no longer do.

109. *Mr. Venancio Guerra (Portugal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

110. **Ms. Banaken Elel** (Cameroon) said that 4.4 million people in Cameroon needed humanitarian assistance, including internally displaced persons and refugees. Her country was facing humanitarian emergencies related to the fight against Boko Haram and the drying-up of Lake Chad, the sociopolitical crises in the subregion and the situation in the country's north-west and south-west regions. In addition, certain communities were chronically vulnerable, a situation that contributed to a high level of food insecurity and malnutrition and a significant risk of epidemics and exposure to climatic shocks. To address that challenge, her country had officially launched the Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Plan in 2018. The strengthening of the humanitarian response and the

reintegration of displaced persons were also included in the National Development Strategy for the period 2020–2022.

111. Several lessons had been learned from the management of the humanitarian situation in Cameroon, particularly with regard to displaced persons. Humanitarian coordination between the various stakeholders, the Government, United Nations agencies and other actors working in the field was central to the success of any humanitarian programme. Under the leadership of the Government, that coordination was ensured in Cameroon through the Humanitarian Response Plan. It was also important to take into account the national context, resources and realities; no standard model had worked effectively. All humanitarian actors must respect the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182; the violation of those principles was likely to affect the climate of trust between different stakeholders and the activities of international actors on the ground.

112. Socioeconomic and development deficits aggravated humanitarian needs, thereby weakening the long-term recovery of people in need of assistance. Sustainable humanitarian solutions could not be found without prioritizing the socioeconomic needs of the people affected and the communities that hosted them. That required meeting the development needs of the countries concerned, which were primarily responsible for their citizens and residents. It was for those countries to define their priorities and direct the resources and actions of all other partners, including the United Nations. It was therefore urgent to strengthen the nexus between development programmes and humanitarian assistance, and to work simultaneously in an integrated manner on prevention, responses and the application of humanitarian solutions.

113. **Ms. Rivera Reyes** (Honduras) said that her Government attached great importance to the issue of internal displacement, which had different characteristics to situations arising from conflicts or natural disasters. The geographical location of Honduras, coupled with the expanse of hard-to-access rural areas and the extreme poverty experienced in those regions, had led criminal organizations to use parts of the territory as transit routes for their illicit trade.

114. Between 2014 and 2018, there had been an estimated 250,000 internally displaced persons in Honduras, representing 2.7 per cent of the population. Over the past few years, the country had experienced protracted internal displacement caused by organized crime. Despite her Government's official recognition of

forced displacement in 2013 through the creation of the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence, challenges remained in addressing the persisting protection needs within high-risk communities as a result of widespread violence, mainly in urban settings. Urban internal displacement in Honduras had occurred gradually, not as a mass movement of people, which made it particularly difficult to identify those affected by it. Armed groups, organized criminal groups and drug trafficking structures had operated in recent years on the basis of institutional weakness in order to consolidate their economic interests and exercise social and territorial control over the population. In most cases, displacement occurred within the same municipality, meaning that risk factors and sources of protection were close to each other. That presented particular challenges in terms of ensuring access to all types of services needed by internally displaced persons, which her Government was working to improve and optimize.

115. Honduras had joined the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework in 2017 and currently held the pro-tempore presidency. The State-led regional implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees had brought greater visibility to the needs of the refugee population. Her Government had been making sustained efforts to address the serious issue of internal displacement and was committed to promoting collaborative spaces, consolidating political commitments and strengthening the framework as an action-oriented mechanism for high-impact results.

116. Honduras was committed to providing an effective response to the problems faced by internally displaced persons, although much remained to be done. Concerted efforts and the long-term development of protection systems were needed to address the needs of internally displaced persons and refugees, providing a means to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the commitment to leave no one behind.

117. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that UNHCR had been a key partner in ensuring the successful functioning of the institution of asylum in his country since 1995. UNHCR had helped Belarus to adapt its national legislation and practices to take in refugees from Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. Belarus had never closed its borders to anyone and had always faithfully upheld its obligations under the 1951 Convention.

118. His delegation was concerned about the dangerous trend, which could be seen to some degree in the conclusions of UNHCR reports, of legitimizing measures taken in certain countries, in contravention of



international standards, to discriminate against refugees on the basis of race and ethnicity and restrict their right to apply for asylum and international protection. Belarus fully agreed with the statement made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees during the seventy-third session of the UNHCR Executive Committee, in which he had noted that, in 2021, some neighbouring countries of Belarus had found it difficult to deal with a few thousand refugees who had been trying to reach Europe, whereas they had been able to welcome millions of Ukrainian refugees in 2022. Some countries had declared states of emergency when 3,000 refugees had gathered on the borders with Belarus. The skin colour of those arriving in the European Union was clearly what made the difference. The exceptionally weak response of international bodies to such measures was very worrying, given that they could have far-reaching negative consequences for the entire international asylum system and thus the fates of the most vulnerable people.

119. In future reports, UNHCR should assess the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the Office's ability to effectively support refugees.

120. **Mr. Abd Aziz** (Malaysia) said that long-standing and brewing conflicts around the world had led to an influx of asylum-seekers and refugees into neighbouring countries. However, the ability of States to ensure the welfare of such people had been significantly impacted by the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and competing priorities. There had been an exponential increase in the number of asylum-seekers and refugees arriving in Malaysia over the years, with some 200,000 registered in the country. Although Malaysia was not a signatory to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, his Government continued to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers. At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia, in collaboration with UNHCR and other non-governmental organizations, had administered COVID-19 vaccines to undocumented migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees holding a UNHCR card as part of the Government's strategy to inoculate as many people in Malaysia as possible as quickly as possible to save lives.

121. Education for refugee children was essential to increasing their chances of resettlement and integration in third countries, thereby enabling them to contribute to the host country and rebuild their home country upon their return. Accordingly, alternative learning centres and community learning centres had been established across Malaysia to advocate the right to education for refugee children. Moreover, his country had had the honour to host the eighth International Seminar on Islamic Perspectives on the Protection of Refugees –

Rights and Access to Education of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in Kuala Lumpur. The resulting Kuala Lumpur Declaration called on all OIC member States to undertake measures to ensure the accessibility of education for refugees.

122. The continued influx of asylum-seekers and refugees, coupled with the slow resettlement process and the lack of that prospect for a substantial number of UNHCR card holders in Malaysia, meant that most of them remained in the country for an extended period of time, placing a significant strain on the country's national resources. For that reason, the signatory countries of the 1951 Convention should uphold their commitment to resettle or relocate more refugees. Equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing was crucial to ensuring that the rights of refugees were well protected. That said, while regional and international cooperation played a key role in mitigating refugee and migration challenges, the only sustainable way of tackling the issue was to address the root causes of the influx of asylum-seekers and refugees.

123. **Mr. Vichankaiyakij** (Thailand) said that it was alarming that, for the first time, over 100 million people were displaced worldwide. That staggering milestone served as a sobering reminder that more urgent and stronger actions were needed to address the causes of displacement. Thailand supported the efforts of UNHCR to promote international burden- and responsibility-sharing, believing that such principles should be upheld so that host communities could maintain their level of humanitarian assistance and commitments. In line with its humanitarian tradition, Thailand had hosted countless people seeking refuge from the neighbouring region over many decades. It supported the creation of a more systematic mechanism that distinguished those with international protection needs from economic migrants, which would enable attention and adequate resources to be targeted at the appropriate persons. In that regard, Thailand was in the process of finalizing the rules, procedures and logistics necessary for the implementation of a national screening mechanism, the eligibility criteria for which had recently been approved by the Thai Cabinet.

124. Particular attention should be given to migrant children to ensure they received suitable protection and humanitarian assistance. Over the past four years, thanks to a memorandum of understanding and standard operating procedures on alternatives to detention for migrant children concluded by Thai agencies, more than 300 children and their families had been relocated from immigration centres to more appropriate facilities. Furthermore, Thailand was drafting a road map towards

the withdrawal of the reservation on article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child related to refugee children.

125. Lastly, recognizing that stateless persons faced lifelong obstacles in accessing such basic rights as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement, Thailand joined the call of UNHCR to end statelessness. For its part, in 2021, the Thai Cabinet had approved the revised criteria for the determination of legal status to accelerate the registration of 400,000 persons remaining with status complications and to enable them to apply for permanent resident status.

126. **Mr. Al-kasawnih** (Jordan) said that for many years, his country had been a destination for refugees fleeing conflict in search of a safe and dignified life. Jordan had the second highest ratio of refugees to citizens in the world, with 3.7 million refugees from 53 nationalities currently in the country, most of them Palestinian and Syrian. All refugees in Jordan received basic services, including health care and education, making it a model country in terms of handling refugee crises.

127. The 1.3 million Syrian refugees hosted by Jordan since the crisis in Syria began, including 676,000 registered with UNHCR, severely taxed the country's limited resources. The international community should uphold its pledges to assist refugees and support United Nations agencies working to meet the needs of refugees and host countries, especially as food insecurity persisted. UNHCR was instrumental in ensuring that refugee issues continued to figure prominently on the global agenda.

128. The question of Palestine refugees in Jordan was under the remit of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), not UNHCR, hence the need to address the Agency's recurring funding shortfall, which undermined its ability to fulfil its mandate of providing vital services to Palestine refugees. It was crucial to find a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine refugees, an issue central to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which was itself at the heart of regional strife.

129. Redoubled regional and international efforts were needed to resolve the Syrian refugee crisis and alleviate its repercussions on host societies. The only way to do so was to reach a lasting political solution to the suffering of the Syrian people and, by restoring security and stability in Syria, create the conditions for safe, voluntary return.

130. **Mr. Alabhoul** (Kuwait) said that the broad-based humanitarian initiatives undertaken by his Government

to assist people living in difficult conditions owing to armed conflict and natural disasters were guided by a policy focused on development and on non-discrimination and non-politicization in the provision of humanitarian aid. UNHCR and Kuwait had a long-standing partnership; the UNHCR office in the country had recently commemorated its thirty-first anniversary.

131. Refugee crises were the destructive side effect of armed conflict, leading to humanitarian catastrophe and social and economic deterioration. To date, some 100 million people had been forced to become refugees or had been displaced, a large percentage of them hailing from Arab countries, fleeing violence, natural disasters and human rights violations.

132. Kuwait commended UNRWA on the vital services it provided to more than 5 million Palestine refugees and condemned illegal Israeli occupation activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the construction and expansion of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes and changes to the demographic composition in the occupied territories, in flagrant violation of international law. The international community must take action to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

133. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the establishment and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan were prohibited under international humanitarian law, and the transfer of Israeli nationals into Occupied Palestinian Territory amounted to a war crime.

134. Kuwait welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to broaden its regional and international donor network. It was necessary to ensure the safety of UNHCR staff, a quarter of whom worked in high-risk locations.

135. In closing, his delegation called on the international community to resolve conflicts peacefully through dialogue, bring all parties to the negotiating table and address refugee and displacement issues.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*