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Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Sixty-second session

Summary record of the 654th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 6 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Knutsson (Vice-Chairperson).....(Sweden)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee:

(a) International protection (*continued*) (A/AC.96/1098 and Add.1, A/AC.96/1106, A/AC.96/1097 and A/AC.96/1104)

1. **Mr. Sakshita** (Japan) said that he was concerned about the limited progress being made on voluntary repatriation due to unfavourable conditions in refugees' country of origin. The requirements of refugee protection must not be allowed to obscure the importance of self-reliance and socioeconomic integration for refugees. UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations must work together to bring about a smooth transition between the humanitarian assistance phase and the development aid phase. Japan had worked with UNHCR on more than fifty projects in around thirty countries, including, most recently, in Tunisia, and his Government hoped to build on that fruitful cooperation. Noting the need for effective cooperation among United Nations bodies in order to ensure that displaced persons received adequate protection, he said that Japan welcomed the implementation of the "United in Action" initiative. The joint operations of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Libya were a very good example of synergy. He welcomed the progress made with numerous resettlement programmes and recalled that Japan, working in cooperation with UNHCR, had recently launched three resettlement pilot projects, including in Myanmar and Thailand.

2. **Mr. Dennison** (United Kingdom) welcomed the decision by UNHCR to increase its protection staff numbers and protection capacities, including by strengthening its field presence in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recalling that there were still 12 million stateless persons worldwide, he asked if the 2011 budget adopted by UNHCR to deal with statelessness was adequate for the task. The fact that 27.5 million people had been displaced by conflict in 2010 pointed to the failure of measures taken to protect civilians in armed conflict and the need to create the right conditions to prevent displacement and facilitate return. The United Kingdom was furthermore concerned about gender-based violence, particularly against women and girls, which remained one of the greatest threats facing refugees and displaced persons. He encouraged UNHCR to strengthen camp security and said that he would be glad to receive updated information on the follow-up given to the evaluation conducted in 2010 of the UNHCR strategy on age and gender issues.

3. **Mr. Lang** (Germany) said that 50 per cent of refugee children were not being registered, which left those children more vulnerable to deprivation, exclusion and abuse, and that birth registration was a key element in combating statelessness. The elimination of discriminatory laws on citizenship would be a very important first step in that regard. More States should accede to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and all parties should contribute to the consultative meeting on birth registration due to be held in November 2011. He welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on strengthened efforts to combat racism and xenophobia encountered by people who received assistance from UNHCR. Noting that the damage caused by natural disasters had quadrupled over the previous three decades, he said that a more detailed analysis was needed of new displacement trends linked to climate change and of strategies to address them, in particular better disaster preparedness. Given that humanitarian operations often took place in high-risk environments, innovative approaches that would enable humanitarian actors to continue their work on the ground needed to be adopted based, for example, on a thorough analysis of threats and enhanced cooperation and exchanges of information between humanitarian partners.

4. **Ms. Ingres** (France) expressed interest in the proposal that the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection had made in her note on international protection about developing a global guiding framework on climate-change-related displacement and other major international trends. In that connection, she said that she would like to know whether the instruments providing for the protection of internally displaced persons and refugees were sufficient to address those new forms of displacement. Her Government wished to reiterate its proposal to hold a discussion on global protection challenges, an exercise that seemed all the more important given that UNHCR wished to become more involved in protection efforts in natural disasters. Several topics would repay further study, in particular: how to react to a growing number of cases of displacement caused by multiple and concomitant factors; what status and protection to offer to persons displaced as a result of climate change; and what responsibility States should bear in that regard.

5. **Mr. Hanniffy** (Ireland) said that children accounted for approximately half the total number of persons of concern to UNHCR and were particularly vulnerable. He recalled the discrimination and violence directed at refugees on the basis of their sexual orientation. He said that gender-based violence was one of the greatest threats to refugees' security and that Ireland therefore encouraged UNHCR to boost its capacity to prevent and combat such violence [sic]. He welcomed the commitment that UNHCR had made to strengthening its protection capacities and increasing the number of protection officers working in the field. Protection could also be enhanced through better coordination of international initiatives in the framework of an effective protection cluster that drew on the experience and expertise of UNHCR, particularly in natural disasters.

6. **Mr. Aweke** (Ethiopia) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Lesotho on behalf of the Group of African States at the 648th meeting. It was regrettable that insufficient resources had been provided for the programme to manage influxes of Eritrean refugees into Ethiopia. The services provided in refugee camps did not generally meet minimum standards, which explained why refugees were leaving the camps to go abroad and were exposing themselves to multiple dangers. He recommended that living conditions in the camps should be improved and training given to refugees. The Government of Ethiopia had implemented an "out-of-camp" policy to allow refugees to live wherever they wished in Ethiopia. More than 3,000 refugees had already benefited from the policy. Refugees needed to be given access to education if they were to be encouraged to leave the camps and to become self-reliant. The Government had set up a study grants scheme toward that end. Assistance from donor countries and organizations was needed for the ongoing implementation of the policy.

7. **Mr. Elaghabash** (Sudan) said that his country, with assistance from UNHCR, had drawn up a refugee bill which was due to be enacted in the near future. In order to be able to deal with the influx of huge numbers of refugees in the east of the country, the competent national authorities needed to build their capacities, particularly in processing of applications and the delivery of food aid. The Sudan was directly affected by the negative impact of mixed migration flows. A solution to the problems of secondary migration and human trafficking, particularly in northern Sudan, was urgently needed. The Government of the Sudan hoped that UNHCR would be able to assist it in resolving those problems.

8. **Mr. Navarro Brin** (Observer for Panama) said that Panama had ratified the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in June 2011 and had taken new measures to protect those particularly vulnerable persons. The civil registration authorities had decided to register the children of Colombians who had been the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia and who were living in Panama, provided that those children had been born in Panamanian territory. The law also allowed for the registration of children born in Panama whose parents were in an irregular situation. The second Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

on the Right to Identity and Universal Birth Registration had been held in Panama in September 2011. A bill had been tabled in July 2011 under which 800 Colombians in the Darien province who benefited from temporary protection status would be allowed to register as residents and work legally. In October 2011, the National Immigration Service would be embarking on a special regularization process, the seventh such exercise, to allow foreigners in an irregular situation to regularize their status.

9. **Mr. Al-Musawi** (Observer for Iraq) said that he wished to stress the importance of the recent measures taken by his Government to improve living conditions for refugees and displaced persons and to facilitate their voluntary return. The authorities had instituted a rehousing programme for displaced persons who returned to Iraq. Measures had furthermore been taken to help minorities, particularly Christians, to gain access to services specifically designed to facilitate their local integration. The Government of Iraq was grateful to the donor countries that had supported it, in particular the United States of America, which had made a major contribution to housing programmes.

10. **Mr. Schoch** (Human Rights Watch), speaking on behalf of a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), drew attention to emergency situations in which States had failed in their duty to protect. In Kenya, three camps near Dadaab that had been designed for 90,000 refugees were sheltering close to half a million people. Tens of thousands of refugees lived in perilous conditions outside camps, and large numbers of women and children were subjected to sexual violence in the vicinity of camps. He called on Kenya and UNHCR to redouble their efforts to remedy that situation. In Mozambique, the security forces had recently killed eight Somali asylum seekers. He called on Mozambique to investigate those incidents, to put an end to the violence against asylum seekers and to ensure that those seeking asylum had access to UNHCR. NGOs were concerned about the large number of grave human rights violations being perpetrated in Rwanda and the real risk of persecution that Rwandan refugees would face if forced to return home after the cessation clause had been applied to the whole Rwandan refugee population in Zambia.

11. South Africa had recently prevented Zimbabwean asylum seekers from entering the country and had forcibly returned registered asylum seekers because they did not possess any travel documents. NGOs called on South Africa to put an end to those unlawful practices. Since June 2011, the Sudan had been deliberately bombing civilian areas, displacing at least 200,000 people, and had prevented United Nations agencies from delivering aid to the displaced. The Sudan must cease such abuses and refrain from its systematic practice of sending Eritrean asylum seekers back to their country. After pressure had been brought to bear by China, in August 2011, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand had expelled 17 members of the Uighur community to China, where they risked being tortured. NGOs condemned such practices and called on the States concerned to resist such pressure. They urged Thailand to resolve the problem of the protracted detention of tens of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers in closed camps and to desist from engaging in refoulement. The European Union continued to maintain a poor record on refugee resettlement. Out of 110,000 refugees resettled worldwide in 2010, only 4,707 had been taken in by 10 European Union Member States. He called on the other Member States to accede to resettlement requests from UNHCR and called on the European Union to make sure that the rights of asylum seekers were observed under the common European asylum system. Noting that Italy had received more than 50,000 migrants arriving by sea in 2011, he said it was regrettable that Italy had returned irregular migrants on 17 June 2011, when the armed conflict was still raging in Libya. He called on Italy to receive migrants arriving by sea in decent conditions and to examine their requests for protection.

12. **Ms. Feller** (Assistant High Commissioner for Protection) welcomed the outstanding cooperation on protection issues that had existed between UNHCR and Sweden for many

years and the strong participation of countries of the European Union in quality initiatives to improve their asylum system. She noted with satisfaction that the Government of Algeria had left its borders open to receive 14,000 people arriving from Libya, that it had granted UNHCR access to border areas and that it had facilitated cooperation between UNHCR and the Algerian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Algerian Red Crescent Society and United Nations partners on evaluation missions, in the light of which humanitarian aid projects would be carried out in border areas. She thanked the Government of Japan for participating in resettlement programmes. Turning to the United Kingdom delegation, she said that it was the fourth year that UNHCR was reporting to the Executive Committee on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in order to ensure that all stakeholders met their responsibilities in that area. The expenditure on statelessness programmes had amounted to US\$ 29 million in 2010 and should increase to US\$ 35 million in 2011.

13. She thanked the Government of Germany for its help with the work done by the Executive Committee on birth registration and said she hoped that the Executive Committee would agree to include the issues of the responsibility of States and the importance of partnerships in its outcome document. Drawing attention to the fact that the statement by the delegation of Ireland largely reflected that made by the delegation of France on the subject of protection gaps, she said that UNHCR stood ready to contribute to a discussion of the subjects mentioned by the French delegation. She commended Ethiopia on the hospitality that it had shown to refugees and asylum seekers, both new arrivals and those in prolonged exile, and reaffirmed that UNHCR supported that country's out-of-camp policy. She congratulated the Sudan on adopting a law on asylum and said that, under the ProCap initiative, a post has been established in Kassala for a person who will help with refugee status determination. She welcomed the fact that Panama had acceded to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Lastly, she assured Human Rights Watch that UNHCR took account of NGO recommendations.

(b) Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight (A/AC.96/1106, A/AC.96/1009 and Add. 1, and A/AC.96/1101)

14. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner) introduced the report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the accounts of the Voluntary Funds administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the year ending 31 December 2010 (A/AC.96/1099). In 2010, the first year when UNHCR used its new budget structure, voluntary contributions had amounted to US\$ 1.9 billion, 8 per cent more than in 2009, which was evidence of donor support despite a volatile economic situation. Also in 2010, the total funds available had amounted to US\$ 1.8 billion, an increase of 7 per cent over 2009. The Board of Auditors had issued 33 recommendations, which had all been accepted by UNHCR and on which some preliminary action had been taken.

15. The Board of Auditors had issued seven major recommendations, on which UNHCR had begun to take action. First, UNHCR must put in place an effective system for preparing financial statements. To that end, the financial statements for 2011 would include improved data reconciliation and schedules. Second, UNHCR needed to review the financial management capacities of field offices, make sure that management and financial reports were used as management tools, roll out a centralized payment system, rationalize the number of bank accounts and continue with bank reconciliations. Third, UNHCR had to strengthen its preparation for the implementation of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), effective on 1 January 2012. To that end it had worked with the Board of Auditors on revised financial rules and regulations. It intended to produce a set of IPSAS-compliant accounts, clean up its accounting records and establish a programme to make sure that the envisaged benefits of the IPSAS project were in fact delivered. Fourth, UNHCR reports needed to link financial and output data more consistently. In that regard,

UNHCR had simplified the planning process, established a set of global strategic priorities and formed a working group to identify the changes that needed to be made to reports so that they would show both planning and actual costs. Fifth, UNHCR needed to institute an organization-wide approach to risk management and maintain a corporate risk register that would be constantly updated. In that connection, UNHCR had participated in high-level, inter-agency discussions on enterprise risk management and had been developing a risk-management policy and framework since 1 August 2011. Sixth, UNHCR needed to be able to justify its decisions on the selection of implementing partners and to evaluate options for alternative partnerships. UNHCR had taken steps to improve the selection process; it had instructed field offices to establish committees to select implementing partners and had run workshops on selection processes. Seventh, given that protracted refugee situations had an impact on UNHCR resource management, it was important to clarify where ownership for those situations lay. UNHCR had initiated internal discussions with a view to clarifying that issue.

16. **Mr. Park** (Republic of Korea) noted with concern that the Board of Auditors had identified more weaknesses in 2010 than in 2009. He called upon UNHCR to redouble its efforts to follow up on the Board's 33 recommendations and said that he welcomed the progress made on the establishment of an independent audit and oversight committee.

17. **Mr. Lang** (Germany) urged UNHCR to give higher priority to human resource management and to adapt the performance management and appraisal system based on the lessons learned from the first cycle. Noting that the majority of UNHCR staff worked in the field, he said that incentives, including financial incentives, must be provided to encourage excellent staff to undertake missions in the most difficult locations.

18. **Ms. Ingres** (France) said that the report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/AC.96/1088) drew attention to a number of issues: the lack of a strategic framework; the poor coordination between international and local implementing partners; the need to improve the process for selecting implementing partners in the field; the failure to establish a framework for managing partnerships with NGOs; and the weaknesses in procurement management. She encouraged UNHCR to continue to resolve those problems, to improve the situation with regard to staff in between assignments, to formulate policy guidelines, and to distribute information on rules and procedures to all offices.

19. **Ms. Furuya** (Japan) said that UNHCR must redouble its efforts to resolve the problems identified in the Board of Auditors' report, work more closely with local NGOs and to establish clear and transparent procedures for selecting implementing partners.

20. **Ms. Terstal** (Netherlands), welcoming the progress that had been achieved, said that UNHCR needed to become more efficient and that demonstrate greater cost effectiveness. Her Government attached particular importance to the introduction of improvements to bank reconciliations, results-based management, the Focus software and to the implementing partners management framework.

21. **Ms. Clifford** (Sweden) said she was concerned that UNHCR was unable to provide information on the specific benefits of its reform process or to select and manage its implementing partners effectively. Priority must be given to establishing a mechanism to monitor the results achieved by implementing partners, and UNHCR must step up its efforts to build on the reform process. She welcomed the cooperation between UNHCR and private sector partners and said that the partnership with the Ikea Foundation to improve conditions at the Dadaab camp could serve as an inspiration for other multinationals. She said that she would welcome information from UNHCR on the functions of the independent audit and oversight committee and on its links with other UNHCR oversight mechanisms.

22. **Mr. Desbiens** (Canada) said that he wished to congratulate UNHCR on the progress that it had made with the institution of structural and management changes and to draw its

attention to three goals: establishing priorities for resource allocations in the light of growing humanitarian needs; fine-tuning tools and processes for results-based management; and creating effective partnerships. The Government of Canada welcomed the determination that UNHCR had shown to introduce results-based management and recognized that progress had already been made, notwithstanding the many difficulties associated with the introduction of new planning, follow-up and reporting systems. He urged UNHCR to continue to allocate resources to improving management tools and processes so as to enable the agency to report on the progress made in meeting objectives, whether at headquarters or in the field.

23. He said that he wished to stress the importance of establishing effective partnerships. In 2010, implementing partners had carried out activities accounting for 38 per cent of total expenditure, which signalled a major change in the way that UNHCR did business. The Government of Canada encouraged the Office of the High Commissioner to continue to formulate sound planning, follow-up and management policies so as to ensure that partnerships achieved the desired results. In that connection, UNHCR could take steps to improve coordination with other institutions.

24. **Mr. Moeling** (United States of America) said that while he welcomed the progress that UNHCR had made in following up on the Board of Auditors' recommendations, a number of the Board's conclusions gave cause for concern. First, UNHCR must be able to assess the performance of implementing partners more effectively using results-based indicators. Second, it must appoint a person to coordinate activities carried out under the Global Action Plan on Protracted Refugee Situations. Third, it must introduce an organization-wide approach to risk management. Lastly, it must improve oversight in key areas such as bank-account, client-account and assets management. His Government hoped that UNHCR would continue with the implementation of IPSAS and welcomed the progress made with the establishment of an independent audit and oversight committee. While the steps taken by UNHCR to reallocate resources used at headquarters to populations of concern were laudable, the Office must continue to carry out its quality control, coordination and reporting functions with respect to all regions and ensure that it had qualified technical staff to support field operations. UNHCR should follow up on the recommendations of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service and look into increasing staff numbers within the Service, which played a vital role in the organization.

25. **Mr. Mardo** (Observer for Chad) said that Chadian partners needed to receive training to be able to master the Focus software, which was an important tool for integrated management of activities. He said that camp relocation operations in southern and eastern Chad would have financial implications that needed to be taken into account in the 2012/13 budget.

26. **Ms. Oates-Mercier** (Australia) said that she welcomed the measures taken or planned by UNHCR to follow up on the Board of Auditors' recommendations, and she encouraged UNHCR to adopt the recommendation suggesting on the establishment of a single point of ownership for protracted refugee situations.

27. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner) said that the Board of Auditors had focused its attention on different areas in 2010 from those considered in previous years, which could explain why it had identified a larger number of weaknesses. When the reform process had been launched, it had been necessary to begin by clarifying the objectives for the year and to report on the progress made in meeting them. Those needs could be met using results-based management and the Focus software. Steps must now be taken to improve financial accountability across all departments and to develop an evaluation system that focused on efficiency. While the existing system was useful, it had largely been designed for policy evaluation. A study would be conducted with a view to the introduction of a new system to measure efficiency. A framework for risk management was due to be

unveiled in 2012. The independent audit and oversight committee would be tasked with identifying issues that needed to be considered with and analysing oversight activities from a risk perspective. It would also make sure that there was no overlap between the functions of existing oversight bodies. A list of persons who could be nominated to sit on the committee would be transmitted to the Executive Committee shortly.

28. In 2012, the performance management and appraisal system would be reviewed with a view to the identification of any changes that might be needed. As for the ever growing number of implementing partners, better selection and follow-up policies and practices should make up for the lack of a strategic framework. Moreover, the Focus software, currently in the second phase of development, should provide a clearer picture of the outcome of their activities. On procurement, UNHCR intended to acquire the most up-to-date computer system. With regard to human resources, the High Commissioner had called for new rules to be applied to long-term contracts and to staff in between assignments; those rules were now going through the approval process. There was clearly a need for greater oversight with respect to local non-governmental organizations, whose numbers had increased in recent years.

29. Responding to the comment by the representative of Sweden about the inability of UNHCR to show what the specific results of its reform process had been, he said he hoped that the changes made to the results-based management system and the introduction of the Focus software worldwide would help to remedy that situation. The Standing Committee would soon be provided with an innovation framework comprising a set of initiatives for implementation, including for cooperation with the private sector. As for priority-setting, the global strategic priorities had been condensed into a concise list which gave a very clear indication of where the main priorities lay. The new approaches taken to resource mobilization had resulted in an increase of around 400 per cent in private sector contributions in recent years, a figure that should be confirmed in the coming five years. The question of a stronger role for the Policy Development and Evaluation Service, which had been raised by the United States representative, was already on the UNHCR agenda. Responding to the comments by the representative of Chad, he said that additional funds had been earmarked for the camp-relocation operations in Chad. Responding to the comments by the representative of Australia, he said that the recommendation on establishing a single point of ownership for protracted refugee situations had been duly noted.

Decision on item 5 (b) of the agenda

30. **The Chairperson** invited the Executive Committee to consider the final draft of the Financial Rules for Voluntary Funds Administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees (A/AC.96/503/Rev.10), which had been submitted by the Standing Committee. If he heard no objections, he would take it that the Executive Committee approved the draft text.

31. *It was so decided.*

Consideration of reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation

(i) Report on activities of the Inspector General's Office (A/AC.96/1102)

32. **Mr. Kebede** (Inspector General of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that significant progress had been made in the areas of oversight and accountability, following, inter alia, the recent adoption of a decision to establish an independent audit and oversight committee. However, much remained to be done, mainly due to the substantial increase in the UNHCR budget and the expansion of UNHCR activities and of related risks. On the subject of inspections, the Office intended to

publish its inspection reports in a timely fashion and to include only critical recommendations which took full account of the financial implications for the organization. With regard to investigations, he would continue to give priority to well-founded allegations of serious fraud or professional misconduct. Cooperation between the various UNHCR oversight bodies and with United Nations system-wide entities would remain a priority.

33. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that he welcomed the strengthened cooperation between the Inspector General's Office and other UNHCR oversight bodies and with United Nations system-wide entities such as the Office of Internal Oversight and the Joint Inspection Unit. The creation of a group within the Investigations Service to receive complaints and the introduction of new case management software should make it easier to investigate complaints and help to discourage wrongdoing. His Government welcomed the introduction of a communication strategy, which was essential for disseminating information about UNHCR activities and for mobilizing resources. The marked increase (54 per cent) in the number of complaints received by comparison with 2010 was explained by the fact that the new computer tools made it easier for complainants to contact the Inspector General's Office. The "traditional" methods of access should be retained, however, to ensure that complainants without access to modern technologies were not placed at a disadvantage. He said that his delegation would be glad to receive additional information on the action taken in response to the recommendations that the Inspector General's Office issued following investigations.

34. **Mr. Moeling** (United States of America) said that his delegation took a close interest in the matters that the Inspector General's Office dealt with and would be sure to support Mr. Kebede.

35. **Mr. Kebede** (Inspector General) said that external partners had a say in oversight activities and that any information that could be circulated externally would be transmitted to delegations.

(ii) *Policy development and evaluation* (A/AC.96/1103)

36. **Mr. Crisp** (Policy Development and Evaluation Service) explained that the job of the Service that he managed was to provide UNHCR and its partners with information, analysis and ideas that could be used for policymaking, programming and planning. Fifteen projects had been completed during the previous year, including evaluations of UNHCR urban refugee programmes and reviews of the action taken by UNHCR in response to a number of recent emergencies. A series of evaluations would soon be published on the role of UNHCR in protracted refugee situations, notably in Bangladesh, the Sudan, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Service would also shortly be publishing reports on the steps taken to link humanitarian assistance to development aid, on UNHCR operations in insecure environments and on the role of UNHCR in voluntary repatriation of refugees. The Service was about to complete a study of protection issues that had arisen in recent natural disasters and had just embarked on a study of shelters for victims of sexual or gender-based violence. Lastly, it continued to act as a focal point for inter-agency evaluations and external views of UNHCR.

37. The Service had a research programme to identify innovative strategies for operational activities. It was important that steps should be taken to strengthen the programme without putting a strain on the organization's budget. The Service's first objective was to maintain and, if possible, to strengthen its capacities without incurring additional expenditures or creating new posts. Its second objective was to determine whether the evaluation function could be decentralized so that other entities, such as regional or bureaux country offices, could take on more responsibility for conducting independent reviews of their activities. The Service provided information which was

utilized effectively, as could be seen from the policies and programmes that had clearly been designed based on its conclusions and recommendations, particularly with regard to issues such as urban refugees, refugee education, the role of UNHCR in emergencies and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming.

38. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that he would like the Executive Committee to be provided with information on the outcome of the inter-agency workshop on effective practices in urban refugee programmes organized by the Policy Development and Evaluation Service and UN-HABITAT in June 2011. His delegation looked forward to the publication of the evaluation conducted of the implementation of the High-Commissioner's Special Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations, in particular with respect to the use of food aid for refugees in such situations. Given that one of the key tasks of UNHCR was to provide durable solutions, the Service must closely monitor the activities undertaken by the organization to promote those solutions. The Service should also evaluate the organization's emergency-preparedness and response capacity on a regular basis. He welcomed the steps taken to implement the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy in UNHCR emergency operations and to take account of specific situations such as disabilities. In his view, if the evaluation function were to be decentralized it could complicate the task of staff, who would have to be present in the field in order to respond to emergencies but also be at headquarters to carry out the analytical work. It would be better if regional bureaux and country offices continued to carry out their mandates.

39. **Mr. Moeling** (United States of America) said that the Policy Development and Evaluation Service and UNHCR as a whole must retain their evaluation capacities, since the task of evaluation could not be left to external entities alone. Budgetary resources must be allocated for research activities, which helped to improve the effectiveness of UNHCR as an organization. Lastly, follow-up on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming in programmes, emergency operations and funding for urban refugee programmes must be assured.

40. **Mr. Katelo** (Kenya) said that he welcomed the work done by the Policy Development and Evaluation Service on the programme for urban refugees in Kenya; it had helped to improve protection for those refugees and to identify durable solutions.

41. **Mr. Crisp** (Policy Development and Evaluation Service) said that he would provide the delegation of Morocco with information on the outcome of the inter-agency workshop that the Service had organized in June 2011 and that had led to the creation of a website providing information on effective practices with respect to urban refugees. The study being conducted jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP) on the use of food aid in protracted refugee situations was a long-term project. A team was already at work in Ethiopia and another was getting ready to go to Rwanda. The UNHCR age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy was an example of an effective practice based on a global evaluation exercise. The issue of disabilities, which was part of that strategy, had not received the attention that it deserved. The Service had, however, published a study showing that the services provided to persons of concern with disabilities were inadequate in many locations and needed to be improved. The issue of decentralization of evaluation activities was currently being discussed at UNHCR. A cautious approach was needed, since the infrastructure needed for a major decentralization exercise was lacking. While Morocco was not among the countries with which the Service had a research partnership, any proposals in that regard would be examined.

42. Responding to the points raised by the United States representative, he said that age, gender and diversity mainstreaming and emergency operations had become vital elements of the Service's work. The urban refugee programme in Kenya had brought some excellent practices to light but had also shown that there were insufficient resources to meet the needs of between 80,000 and 90,000 refugees in Nairobi, not to mention those of the growing

number of urban refugees living outside the capital. The Service would continue to monitor that situation closely.

Consideration and adoption of the Biennial Programme Budget 2012–2013

(A/AC.96/1100 and Corr.1 and 2)

43. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner) said that he wished to provide an overview of the proposed 2012–2013 biennial programme budget (A/AC.96/1100 and Corr.1 and 2). The budget was based on a global needs assessment and amounted to US\$ 3.59 billion for 2012 and US\$ 3.42 billion for 2013. The figures were shown in Table B in document A/AC.96/1100. The 2012 proposed programme budget represented an 8 per cent increase over the 2011 budget approved by the Executive Committee and a 5 per cent decrease compared to the existing 2011 budget. Full details of the structure of the programme budget, by theme and region, could be found in the aforementioned document.

44. **Mr. Lerotholi** (Lesotho), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that he approved the 2012–2013 biennial programme budget, which was based on the Global Needs Assessment rather than on resource availability. He welcomed the attention that UNHCR was paying to strengthening protection activities in field operations and to the promotion of durable solutions. Given that Africa continued to witness severe humanitarian crises caused by forced displacement linked to drought and armed conflict, the Group of African States was concerned that the funding allocated to Africa in the proposed 2012 budget had been cut by US\$ 116.3 million and that the same trend could be found in the 2013 budget. The Group feared that, with the proposed budget cuts, coupled with the global economic situation and the traditional earmarking of resources by donors, UNHCR would not meet the actual needs of refugees in Africa. The budget cuts would have a grave impact on the already precarious humanitarian situation in some regions of Africa and would increase burden on host countries. The Group called upon the international community to find the necessary resources to meet the humanitarian needs of those refugees, in a spirit of international burden-and-responsibility sharing. It also encouraged UNHCR to continue to utilize resources effectively and to look for donors among non-traditional donors and in the private sector.

45. **Mr. Moeling** (United States of America) recalled that the United States was the single largest donor to UNHCR (contributing US\$ 680 million in 2011) and urged Executive Committee members to support UNHCR activities by providing flexible, robust and predictable contributions and by refraining from earmarking contributions. He said that he supported the 2012–2013 biennial programme budget and encouraged UNHCR to organize consultative meetings to allow Executive Committee members to understand the budget decisions being taken by the organization. He also encouraged UNHCR to ensure that, as budget decision were taken, prioritization of activities was transparent and consistent and that persons of concern were consulted. He said that he was pleased to note that the UNHCR programme of work for 2012 and 2013 would be guided by the Global Strategic Priorities, including in regard to urban refugees and protracted refugee situations, and that the organization continued to pursue its efforts to reduce statelessness. In that regard, UNHCR must be more ambitious and think creatively as it engaged in initiatives to address those problems.

46. The United States called on UNHCR to ensure that the specific needs of women and children, who represented more than 80 per cent of the persons of concern to the organization, were given priority. Several policies focusing on that population group had recently been drafted or updated, but it was time for them to be put into effect so that the living conditions of women and children under UNHCR care could be improved. In the proposed programme budget, only field budgets were needs-based, while the budgets for global programmes and headquarters were based on expected income. The method had

allowed UNHCR to send more staff to the field, but that had been at the expense of critical areas such as child protection, sexual and gender-based violence and programme oversight. UNHCR should therefore present a budget that was entirely needs-based.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.