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Agenda item 60: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (A/71/12, A/71/12/Add.1 and A/71/354)

1. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that addressing the plight of persons uprooted from their homes as a result of conflict, violence and persecution was one of the defining challenges of the current age. Not for decades had so many people been on the move: more than 65 million persons were displaced internally or across borders, and the number continued to climb. In the previous six weeks more than 111,000 people had fled from South Sudan; the death toll of refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean Sea had reached 4,000, which was more than the total for the whole of 2015; and armed activities in the Mosul region of Iraq had displaced over 20,000 people, in addition to the country's 3.3 million internally displaced persons.

2. It had become difficult to make and build peace. The Security Council and regional organizations seemed to have lost the will to address conflicts in a united manner, while every day the moral and legal boundaries of international humanitarian law were crossed more deliberately and with greater impunity. Future generations would be severe judges of the collective incapacity to prevent and solve conflicts and protect people from the consequences of war.

3. The entangled conflicts in Iraq and Syria accounted for almost one quarter of the world's displaced people, and were being fuelled by deep sectarian divisions, religious extremism, terrorism and bad governance. The war in Syria, which was entering its sixth year, continued to be the cause of the biggest humanitarian crisis, with 6.5 million internally displaced persons and 4.8 million refugees. States with the power to stop the fighting had been unable to reach agreement, with the result that horror, suffering and destruction continued unabated. Syrians currently found themselves trapped in their own country, with the borders closed or difficult to cross. That was most evident in Aleppo, where civilians were being targeted and used as pawns of war, which highlighted the extent of current violations of international humanitarian law. The number of internally displaced persons was bound to rise if hostilities continued.

4. As part of a broader United Nations effort, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would continue to work with non-governmental organizations and other partners inside Syria to alleviate the plight of those to whom it had access. Ultimately, military operations would not resolve their plight or create sustainable conditions for their return. World leaders at the London conference on supporting Syria and the region in February 2016 had raised an unprecedented US\$ 12 billion, of which some US\$ 5.3 billion had been received. Further efforts were required to raise financial resources and generate commitments to resettlement and humanitarian admission.

5. Proximity to conflict zones was the main factor determining how the responsibility to receive refugees was shared. Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt and Iraq continued to host millions of Syrian refugees; Iran and Pakistan had hosted Afghan refugees for almost four decades; and African countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda continued to receive refugees from neighbouring countries engulfed in conflict. Eight out of ten refugees were hosted in developing countries, which placed a severe strain on their already fragile infrastructure and public services. Member States had a crucial responsibility to support countries hosting large refugee populations.

6. Regional conflicts brought a range of security considerations, as some armed groups operated across borders that refugees were also crossing. In the Lake Chad region, the insurgency in north-east Nigeria had spilled across borders to neighbouring countries, bringing about terrible consequences and a complex mixture of refugee outflows, internal displacement and returns. In Afghanistan, Somalia and elsewhere, insecurity and displacement coexisted, and refugees were frequently, though paradoxically, identified as agents of instability.

7. Access to protection was often fraught with complexities. In some cases borders were closed, or entry was restricted, and people seeking refuge were pushed back into conflict zones. There was increasing pressure for them to return home, even in countries with a long tradition of hospitality to refugees. Those who reached safety were often left on the margins, struggling to survive and to connect to the communities around them. They had difficulty

accessing services and were unable to provide food, housing, health care, and other basic needs for their families. Globally, only one in two refugee children of primary school age was enrolled in school, as compared to 91 per cent of children worldwide. Over time, people fell into poverty once their savings and other assets had been exhausted. In Lebanon, for example, 70 per cent of Syrian refugee households were below the poverty line, up from 50 per cent in 2014. Those problems were exacerbated by inadequate support to host countries and within countries of origin and by a broader range of factors driving human mobility, such as food insecurity, poverty, environmental degradation, climate change, inequality and bad governance. Although refugees were a distinct category from migrants, they shared many common factors, including overlapping root causes for their situation and the risks they faced from smugglers, traffickers and xenophobia.

8. The arrival of larger numbers of refugees and migrants in the northern hemisphere had generated fear and eroded key protection standards in some countries with a strong tradition of refugee protection and human rights. The principle that refugees were a matter of international concern, requiring a response based on cooperation and shared responsibility, had been particularly tested in Europe, where States had been unable to implement a well-managed, collective response to the migration crisis and had instead emphasized the need to keep people away from European borders. The legitimate aspiration to better manage population movements, especially those related to economic migration, was increasingly conflated with the idea of keeping everyone out, including those fleeing war, violence and human rights violations. Agreements to relocate migrants within Europe had been implemented to a minimal degree, while calls by UNHCR to expand legal pathways so that refugees could avoid hazardous and costly journeys had not had an adequate response. Imbalances therefore remained, with Italy bearing the brunt of coping with some 160,000 refugees and migrants who had arrived on its shores since early 2016.

9. UNHCR was currently pursuing five core directions, which would become its key areas of investment moving forward. First, it was working to embed protection at the heart of responses to forced displacement, statelessness and humanitarian crises.

The international protection regime balanced legitimate security concerns with the imperative to protect those in need and provided flexible tools to countries and regions striving to uphold their responsibilities. UNHCR was formulating a set of practical suggestions to be offered to the European Union in support of its efforts to respond to refugee movements.

10. UNHCR was working with States, civil society and partners to forge responses to new protection challenges. The San José Action Statement, adopted in July 2016 as a framework for regional cooperation in the northern triangle of Central America, was the fruit of such efforts. Protection was underpinned by the strong operational presence of UNHCR and its direct engagement with displaced and stateless people, driven by the fundamental objective of saving and securing lives and protecting rights, including through action to promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence. UNHCR was devoting particular attention to young people; the focus of its 2016 annual consultations with non-governmental organizations would be children and youth, while the topic of the annual dialogue on protection challenges would be “children on the move”. It also contributed to advancing legal, policy and practical solutions for protecting people displaced as a result of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, which were increasingly significant drivers of global displacement. He welcomed the recent addition of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to the United Nations family and intensified collaboration with IOM in the context of mixed migratory flows.

11. The second core direction concerned the pursuit of solutions to enable refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons to reclaim or acquire full membership in society. It involved cultivating an environment in which their rights were protected and they could build a stable and secure future. That aim was closely linked to the goal of ending conflicts and establishing conditions in which people could return to their countries, which was first and foremost the responsibility of political and security actors, requiring early action to address root causes and prevent the escalation of unrest and violence, and investment in making and building peace. The current situation was bleak, as only 126,000 refugees had been repatriated in 2015, some 11 per cent of the figure of 10 years earlier.

There were, however, signs of hope: in Myanmar, the return of a first group of refugees living in exile in Thailand marked a new stage in the country's path towards peace and democracy; in Côte d'Ivoire, more than 250,000 refugees who had fled political violence had returned home in the previous five years; and in Colombia, peace negotiations had brought the country substantially closer to ending decades of conflict and finding solutions for its almost 7.5 million uprooted people.

12. A major challenge was to explore solutions in fragile contexts in which a definitive resolution had yet to be found. In such situations, it was often possible to leverage opportunities for solutions, including through return, provided that it was genuinely voluntary, and reintegration, while continuing to support host States in maintaining international protection for those who needed it. In Somalia, progress towards stability and prosperity had been tangible, but would continue to entail setbacks. In Afghanistan, the complex dynamics of the ongoing conflict meant that even as some refugees and internally displaced people were returning home, large numbers remained in protracted displacement. More than 300,000 registered Afghan refugees had returned home in 2016, almost all from neighbouring Pakistan, in addition to over 200,000 undocumented Afghans. UNHCR had enough resources to assist only an additional 55,000 people who had registered to return to Afghanistan in November 2016, yet a further 300,000 people had been displaced by conflict in the meantime, compounding the large internal displacement crisis. The onset of winter created an additional challenge. There was an urgent need for additional funds.

13. UNHCR was stepping up its collaboration with Member States and other partners to expand refugees' access to third country solutions, including through resettlement and complementary pathways for admission. Although the increased pledges made by States in 2016 were appreciated, resettlement needs continued to far outpace the availability of places. UNHCR planned to submit at least 170,000 refugees for resettlement in 2017, which would be the highest number in 20 years and was more than double the 2012 figure. It also worked with partners to prevent, reduce and eradicate statelessness and was committed to investing resources to that end. Since the launch by UNHCR of the 10-year campaign to end statelessness,

tens of thousands of people had acquired nationality or had their citizenship confirmed. Important regional initiatives had also been adopted, including the Abidjan Declaration on the eradication of statelessness adopted by the Heads of States of the Economic Community of West African States and the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, and a number of ratifications of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and/or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

14. The third core direction was to partner more firmly with development actors in addressing displacement, building resilience and laying the foundations for solutions. In that area there had been several significant advances, emerging in part from experience in Syria, where UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme had collaborated closely through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, implemented in partnership with host countries. There was, however, a growing recognition that ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity could not be achieved without taking into account the world's forcibly displaced people. The principle of universality, enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, provided a powerful platform for including displaced persons and stateless persons in development planning. Several host countries were taking unprecedented steps to include refugees and host communities in national development plans, recognizing that refugees and internally displaced people could become valuable assets in host communities if the policy environment was right and there was sufficient investment in development. Host countries, however, needed support. The World Bank played a critical role; UNHCR had been scaling up partnership with it to compile evidence of the socioeconomic impact of refugees and displaced people on host communities and countries and to undertake regional studies and develop country action plans. A new World Bank global lending facility to extend concessional financing arrangements to middle-income countries hosting large refugee populations was also a potential game-changer.

15. The fourth core direction centred on the strengthening of emergency preparedness and response capacities. When lives were at risk, UNHCR needed to remain quick and effective in its responses as well as innovative and adaptable to rapidly changing

circumstances. Rapidity and flexibility was also needed on the part of donors, and constant vigilance was required regarding the safety of personnel deployed in very insecure situations. UNHCR had recently launched its policy to employ cash-based interventions more systematically; it was already using cash in over 60 countries, and planned to double the amount of funds for cash-based interventions by the end of 2020. Strengthening strategic partnerships with organizations such as the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were of paramount importance in that regard.

16. The fifth core direction was the use of established coordination mechanisms to engage with internally displaced persons more decisively and predictably, as part of a more integrated approach to displacement. UNHCR had already boosted capacity, including by introducing new guidelines and revitalizing clusters in which it played a lead role, and it was undertaking a thorough operational review of its activities in order to better understand where it needed to become more coherent and predictable. He looked forward to working closely with States, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and other partners in that regard.

17. Building on the work of the previous High Commissioner, UNHCR had identified a number of areas in which its internal capacities and systems needed to be further strengthened. Some internal processes had become cumbersome, requiring compliance with multiple instructions and thereby diverting attention from direct engagement with people. Procedures and other management tools urgently needed to be simplified while maintaining the highest standards of accountability. UNHCR was reviewing the situation of its headquarters to better align its functions with the strategic directions and ensure the best possible support for field operations. It would also reform its planning and resource allocation processes and simplify its results-based management system. In line with its commitments under the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, it was pursuing greater efficiencies in its work with other agencies in conducting needs assessments, harmonizing and simplifying reporting requirements and reducing procurement and logistic costs. It would continue to invest in its workforce of more than 15,000 people, on the basis of its People Strategy 2016-2021, which set

out a vision for addressing key human resources challenges over the following five years.

18. Developing the strategic directions he had described and the management tools that supported them would obviously require substantial financial contributions. In 2016, funds had reached an all-time high of nearly US\$ 4 billion so far but, owing to new and protracted crises and the unparalleled scale of displacement, the budget had reached a historic high of US\$ 7.5 billion. The shortfall in funding impacted all regions, but had particularly dramatic consequences in Africa, where critical situations in countries such as Somalia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic were resourced at less than 25 per cent.

19. The international refugee protection regime had demonstrated its resilience in the face of a difficult global context, with many States next to conflict zones keeping their borders open and most States genuinely striving to find a way to reconcile domestic social, economic and security concerns with the imperative of providing refuge to those in need. The scale and complexity of displacement meant that countries hosting large numbers of displaced people could not be left to shoulder the consequences alone. The principle that refugees were a matter of international concern, requiring a collective response based on solidarity and shared responsibility, was not only a moral obligation, but also a fundamental element of the legal framework embedded in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the bedrock upon which international protection was built.

20. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants had been a critical reaffirmation that cooperation was at the heart of the refugee protection regime which, if implemented with commitment, resolution and investment, could provide a powerful platform for change. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework set out in the Declaration had considerable potential, provided that the political will expressed by Member States could be translated into action. The aim of the Framework was to ease the pressure on host countries by increasing the predictability of contributions, encouraging robust engagement by humanitarian and development actors from the outset of crises and fostering refugee self-reliance that benefited host communities. Crucially, it also opened up investment and opportunities within the

increasingly engaged and influential private sector, thereby strengthening the United Nation's own innovation capacity.

21. He had established a dedicated UNHCR task team to take forward the application of the Framework over the following two years. The task team had already undertaken intensive bilateral consultations with Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society and the private sector. An advisory group had been established in September 2016 and pilot situations were currently being identified. UNHCR would subsequently build on that experience to elaborate a global compact on refugees, to be introduced in 2018, and to that end would engage with States and consult all relevant stakeholders. The UNHCR annual consultations with non-governmental organizations would focus on the process; and the theme of its annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2017 would be the global compact on refugees.

22. Refugees were at the centre of political attention for the first time in decades, but addressing global displacement crises required States to prevent fault lines from developing into conflicts, stem violations of the laws of war, provide refuge to those fleeing in search of safety and marshal the determination to find definitive, political solutions to crises. UNHCR stood ready to work with Member States to achieve those aims.

23. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria) said that his country traditionally hosted refugees out of solidarity and conviction, fundamental principles which were at the heart of the foreign policy of Algeria. When refugees fled their country it was to escape persecution or unstable situations; in most cases, their only hope was to return to their home country. Those seeking integration were the exception. Discussions on integration might distort the original, statutory mandate of UNHCR. He asked what could be done to reframe the discussions, bearing in mind the humanitarian character of UNHCR.

24. **Ms. Vatne** (Norway) paid tribute to UNHCR humanitarian workers in the field, who faced increasingly difficult circumstances. Norway looked forward to cooperating with UNHCR and other States as they moved towards a global compact on responsibility-sharing for refugees. It was particularly encouraged by the High Commissioner's emphasis on

the need to cooperate with actors ranging from humanitarian and development entities to the private sector, as well as States.

25. **Mr. Tsutsumi** (Japan) said that his country had been stressing the importance of involving development partners in the response to humanitarian crises since the 1990s. It was therefore gratified that various partners at last recognized the importance of collaboration between the humanitarian and development sectors. He wondered whether the silos had been broken down sufficiently or if challenges still remained. He asked the High Commissioner to elaborate on how the global compact on refugees might contribute to the further advancement of the humanitarian-development nexus.

26. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was troubling that foreign intervention, occupation and terrorism continued to be the root causes of large-scale movements of refugees. His delegation was also concerned that no new commitments had been made at the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants of 19 September 2016, as refugees and host communities needed more than lip service. Eight out of ten refugees were living in developing countries; countries bordering a crisis zone should not have to shoulder the burden alone. Iran was hosting one of the largest refugee communities, and had been a major host country for the past four decades. The suffering of refugees caught up in protracted situations and that of the communities hosting them should not be eclipsed by new crises. It was also disappointing to hear the bleak outlook on voluntary repatriation to countries of origin. He hoped that the work of the High Commissioner as part of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework would change that trajectory and help ensure that more refugees could be voluntarily resettled in third countries or in their countries of origin.

27. **Mr. Pouleas** (Greece) expressed appreciation for the significant assistance offered by UNHCR in dealing with the current refugee crisis. His country had been facing an unprecedented situation as a result of the largest movement of refugees and migrants in Europe since the end of the Second World War. As the High Commissioner himself had seen during his August 2016 visit to Greece, the refugee crisis was of such a scale as to surpass the capacities of any individual country. Refugee flows constituted a global

challenge that demanded solutions based on international solidarity and shared responsibility among Member States. Addressing the root causes of migration, saving lives, and protecting refugees were among the top priorities in Greece. The March 2016 joint statement between the European Union and Turkey had yielded results, and Greece looked forward to its sustainable implementation, including that of the relocation mechanism, as to date, only a limited number of persons had been relocated. Many challenges remained, and Greece was constantly trying to upgrade its reception facilities with help from international and European partners, with a focus on education for refugee and migrant children, regardless of status.

28. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that of the three solutions to the refugee problem, namely, voluntary repatriation, resettlement in a third country and local integration, voluntary repatriation had always been the first choice. People wanted to return to their home countries, even, in some cases, when the political situation remained fragile and complex. However, repatriation depended on finding a political solution to the conflict that had caused the displacement in the first instance. Thus, it was beyond the scope of UNHCR. Political stakeholders should be encouraged to find the solution. Providing support for repatriation involved intervening in the country of origin, where the complexity of the situation was compounded by security conditions. Unfortunately, repatriation was increasingly rare as conflicts continued unabated. In countries where refugees were accepted, integration, albeit not the first choice, could be envisaged. Dealing with the host country called for a great deal of sensitivity, although sometimes, the outcome had been successful.

29. The key issue for involvement of development actors was to make sure that financial instruments and approaches designed for longer-term, more stable situations could be adapted to more fragile situations such as protracted refugee displacement. The work being done by the World Bank with the help of humanitarian agencies, including UNHCR, was quite forward-looking and could be a game-changer by breaking down silos in an unprecedented manner. It had taken the arrival of refugees and migrants in the global north to open the eyes of the world to the global character and the criticality of displacement. Recently, the World Bank had launched a facility for middle-

income countries that were hosting large numbers of refugees. It was not a panacea but nevertheless had enormous potential, in particular in the field of education and employment. Humanitarian agencies alone could never have covered that ground.

30. His proposal for developing the global compact was to work from the bottom up. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants spelled out how the framework for responding to the refugee crisis should be developed. The proposed compact would not be a new United Nations coordination mechanism but rather a comprehensive response with many partners, including the private sector and many development actors, and with UNHCR acting as a catalyst. Once the models had been established, the substance of the global compact would be presented to Member States for their deliberation. The outlook was bleak but the framework should be useful. UNHCR would want to work in collaboration with Member States, in particular with host countries.

31. Relocation was a vital issue. It had been proposed much earlier within the European Union, and was a positive initiative designed to relieve the burden on frontline States such as Greece and Italy, but also countries like Germany, Sweden and Austria which were receiving a huge influx of refugees. However, it had not been applied consistently. Any viable global refugee response framework had to be based on global solidarity and if Europe wanted to continue to be a leader in refugee protection, it should set the example by showing continental solidarity.

32. **Mr. Al-Hussaini** (Iraq) said that his delegation deeply appreciated the humanitarian assistance provided to refugees and internally displaced persons in Iraq by UNHCR, and warmly welcomed the recent announcement by Mr. Bruno Geddo, the UNHCR representative to Iraq, that the Office would provide additional assistance to meet the pressing needs of Iraqis fleeing the city of Mosul.

33. Huge numbers of people in his country had fled their homes to escape the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In total, there were more than 3.2 million internally displaced persons in Iraq, posing a huge challenge to his Government, which was, nonetheless, making every effort to uphold its moral duty to provide all refugees and internally displaced persons with emergency and humanitarian assistance.

34. He asked the High Commissioner how UNHCR was facilitating the rehabilitation and reintegration into society of internally displaced women and girls, and what steps the Office was taking to promote gender equality, combat gender-based discrimination and encourage the participation of internally displaced women and girls in decision-making.

35. **Ms. Feeling** (Canada) said that her Government was deeply concerned about the global displacement crisis and was committed to the promotion of responsibility-sharing and international solidarity. It recognized the immense challenges faced by States in close proximity to displacement crises. Despite the generosity of donor and resettlement countries, far more support was needed, including contributions from other countries. Canada looked forward to working with UNHCR and other parties on the development of the global compact on refugees. On the subject of xenophobia, she asked how Member States could reverse the negative trends and construct a narrative that acknowledged the positive contributions made by migrants in their host communities.

36. **Mr. Whitely** (Observer for the European Union) said that the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was an excellent and balanced basis for collective multilateral action. The European Union supported the establishment of a global compact on migration by 2018 and the immediate implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. That task would require the active engagement of Member States, but also of other stakeholders such as members of the diaspora, civil society and the private sector. The magnitude of the task would need open channels for information and frequent updates. He would welcome further information concerning the operational review on engagement with internally displaced persons mentioned by the High Commissioner in his statement.

37. **Mr. Teffo** (South Africa) said that while much attention was being focused on Europe, the vast majority of refugees and displaced persons were located in the developing world. Sub-Saharan Africa hosted the majority of refugees worldwide and continued to experience a significant number of simultaneous large-scale refugee crises. His delegation agreed that there was a need for new development approaches to forced displacement which would

involve helping displaced persons acquire skills so that they could become positive contributors to the economies of their host countries as well as ensuring their integration into the host communities so as to foster social cohesion. The root causes of forced displacement must be addressed. To that end, developing countries, especially the sub-Saharan countries, would require significant assistance.

38. **Ms. Sukkar** (Jordan) said that her country had consistently led the way in offering refuge to those fleeing conflict. Jordan was currently hosting the most refugees both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of its population. Five countries were looking after 90 per cent of all Syrian refugees between them, saving countless lives in the process, and their contributions must be recognized. It was vital for Member States to share the burden and support and strengthen national capacities and the humanitarian-development nexus. She asked how the international community could step up its commitments and turn pledges into action.

39. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that proximity should not define responsibility but, unfortunately, that was exactly what happened. Countries that faced their own difficulties were still taking in people. Iraq, despite its huge internal displacement problem, had shown great generosity in hosting refugees from Syria.

40. With respect to gender equality, UNHCR and its partners were carrying out many projects in support of women refugees, who were often alone with their children. It was important to include refugees in decision-making and it was precisely in those situations that women should be given a voice. Jordan was making extraordinary efforts to give employment to refugees but only a small percentage of women refugees obtained jobs. Matching their social, economic and cultural profiles to existing job opportunities was not easy and needed to be approached proactively.

41. Canada had been a leader in setting up legal pathways for the admission of refugees. The mixed model of public and private partnerships proposed by Canada for the sponsorship and resettlement of refugees was a forward-looking model that could be replicated in other countries. The best way to overcome xenophobia was to have communities take the lead in receiving refugees and giving them asylum, thus creating an environment more conducive to acceptance.

Refugees fled their country not by choice but because they were compelled to flee from untenable situations often involving terrible violence.

42. Refugees and migrants not only enriched a country in terms of diversity, but also contributed to the welfare of their communities. UNHCR was working with the World Bank to try to obtain stronger evidence of that reality, which could help to diminish xenophobic trends. No one was in favour of perpetuating refugee situations, least of all the refugees themselves. The focus on solutions should drive home a message to public opinion. Searching for a solution was part of creating a better environment. Integration had to be conducted very early on and in such a way as to prevent the exclusion of communities. Indeed, exclusion led to rejection, resentment and, ultimately, xenophobia. Integration was a very complex exercise, especially in the industrialized countries, and was usually considered to be an internal matter. However, the climate had become so toxic that UNHCR had offered to work with Governments in that respect as well.

43. Internally displaced persons, who accounted for two thirds of the 65 million persons fleeing their homes, were exiles in their own country. The first thing to determine was why some situations were better managed than others and why UNHCR itself was more involved in some cases than in others. Whether it was a matter of resources, political challenges, access or security, each factor would need to be pinpointed and addressed. The cluster system traditionally used by the United Nations to address situations involving internally displaced persons had become too bureaucratic and needed to be reviewed. Coordination was important but must be more effective.

44. **Mr. Rabi** (Morocco) asked the High Commissioner to indicate what steps UNHCR was taking to prevent the siphoning off of humanitarian aid and, if such acts occurred, to prosecute those implicated. Recalling that the international community had agreed unanimously that refugees must be registered as a prerequisite for action by UNHCR in order to assess their needs and guarantee their protection, he asked what the High Commissioner did when the host country consistently refused multiple requests to carry out registration, and what action he would take to ensure that countries complied with their

obligations under international humanitarian law and with respect to the mandate of UNHCR. He also asked what measures the High Commissioner took in respect of countries which taxed humanitarian aid products intended for refugees in their territory; according to some reports, millions of euros were diverted into the coffers of host countries. In terms of the three solutions to the refugee problem, namely voluntary repatriation, resettlement in a third country and local integration, he believed that the discussion should not be limited to only one of the solutions.

45. **Mr. Zewdie** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia was hosting over 780,000 refugees and was covering 80 per cent of the costs involved out of its own meagre resources, while UNHCR covered only 20 per cent. His Government believed that the budget allocation must reflect the realities on the ground. His delegation was not convinced that the report of the High Commissioner covered all issues and believed that a comprehensive, purely humanitarian report would be a good basis for understanding the challenges faced with regard to refugees.

46. **Mr. Uğurluoğlu** (Turkey) said that his delegation hoped that the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants would be swiftly implemented by Member States and other stakeholders. As the country hosting the largest refugee community in the world, Turkey wished to assure the High Commissioner of its full support and to highlight its efforts to provide Syrians in Turkey with a life of dignity, in cooperation with UNHCR. Turkey was glad that its partnership with UNHCR had recently been cemented with a host country agreement. He asked how the main host countries could contribute most meaningfully to follow-up to the New York Declaration and to the development of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

47. **Mr. Gotyaev** (Russian Federation) said that the High Commissioner was starting his mandate at a very difficult time since there were currently record numbers of internally displaced persons. The Russian Federation itself had received over 1 million forcibly displaced persons. His delegation supported the work of UNHCR, but believed that the High Commissioner should endeavour to ensure that all aspects of his mandate were fulfilled, on account of the increasing needs of refugees for protection and long-term

solutions. He asked what measures were being planned to counter statelessness, apart from the extremely successful “I Belong” campaign.

48. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria) said that integration was one solution, but the debate over the past two years had presented integration as the main solution. It was important to guard against the risk that integration would be imposed on host countries.

49. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia) said that he hoped the Colombian experience of transitioning from an internal armed conflict to peace might prove useful for other countries. His delegation was particularly grateful to UNHCR for the support it had provided to Colombian refugees in Ecuador. A binational high-level commission had brought significant improvements in the situation of those refugees; he asked how those best practices could most effectively be shared.

50. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, since UNHCR was not a donor but rather implemented its own programmes, albeit sometimes through partners, it was always present in the field. That approach reduced the risk that funds would be siphoned off, which was more likely to occur during conflicts or when humanitarian access was denied. UNHCR had a responsibility to account for its use of aid and that was another reason it insisted on access to populations.

51. Regarding the taxation of humanitarian aid, UNCHR benefited from certain exemptions and immunities and, while negotiation with host countries was sometimes necessary, it was not usually difficult to reach an agreement.

52. Host countries were responsible for registering refugees, but some needed support or asked UNHCR to perform the task. Considerable progress had been made on the technological front, as he had observed on his return to UNHCR after a 12-year absence, and UNHCR could provide sophisticated tools that ensured the confidentiality of the data.

53. Collaboration with host countries, especially those hosting large numbers of refugees, continued to be a priority for UNHCR. UNHCR recognized that host countries made the greatest contribution to supporting refugees, not only in financial but also in social, political and security terms. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework would not solve all

problems but should serve first and foremost to help host countries obtain more resources and ease their burden. Noting the concerns of the representative of Ethiopia regarding resources, he said that UNHCR had never had plentiful resources; there had been a constant increase in contributions, but needs had always outstripped contributions. However, the framework and the involvement of development actors could bring new types of resources to the table. He recalled that at the Leaders’ Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia had delivered a statement detailing new approaches to refugee employment and education which reflected that country’s policy of responding constructively to the challenges posed by an influx of refugees.

54. It was sometimes forgotten that statelessness was a very important aspect of the UNHCR mandate. The “I Belong” campaign was celebrating its second anniversary in November 2016; during its first two years, many stateless people had been granted citizenship, and he hoped that the figure of 10 million stateless people referred to in the campaign could be reduced to 9.5 million by the time of the next anniversary. It was difficult to obtain reliable statistics on statelessness, since that was a sensitive political issue in many countries. UNHCR was fully committed to addressing the problem of statelessness through the exploration of legal avenues and the provision of legal tools.

55. He had visited Colombia in July 2016 and had been struck by the extraordinary commitment of civil society to solving the problem of displacement. The challenges were huge: many of the millions of internally displaced persons in Colombia were from rural areas and had lived on the outskirts of cities for decades. The problem of displacement was therefore compounded by urbanization; sophisticated socioeconomic tools would be needed. Some of the themes that had been discussed at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) were very relevant. Most significant of all was the universal recognition in Colombia that a political framework would be needed to solve the problem of displacement and he was therefore encouraged to hear that resolving displacement was one of the objectives of the peace process. He believed that that was one of the strongest messages to pass on to other countries dealing with displacement.

56. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the Stabilization and Association Process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that European Union member States alone had received more than 1.3 million asylum applicants in 2015, with a similar trend in 2016. The current displacements were expected to be protracted, the average duration for such movements being more than 10 years. Host countries of the global South were to be commended for their enormous generosity in welcoming nearly 9 out of 10 refugees. The European Union and its member States reaffirmed their commitment to support host countries and communities both worldwide and within the European Union itself. At the same time, they underlined the need to strengthen protection, improve the situation of persons of concern, and facilitate durable solutions.

57. The international community must do more to prevent forced displacement, address its root causes and reinvigorate efforts to find solutions. Political and development actors had a crucial role to play along with the humanitarian community in implementing a comprehensive, long-term approach. Resolving and preventing conflicts and preventing relapses into conflicts was a primary objective of the external action of the European Union. The European Union had also proposed a new, development-oriented policy framework to address forced displacement which sought to foster the self-reliance and resilience of displaced persons and their host communities by promoting sustainable livelihoods and access to basic services, including education at all levels. That policy was already being implemented, in particular through regional development and protection programmes and joint humanitarian development frameworks, as well as resilience programming under European Union trust funds.

58. Expressing deep appreciation for the humanitarian relief workers and volunteers who regularly put their lives at risk to assist those in need, she urged Member States to reconfirm the core humanitarian principles and underline the importance of respect for international humanitarian and refugee law.

59. Financial support for UNHCR was at an unprecedentedly high level, suggesting that donors recognized the competence, knowledge and skills of the High Commissioner and his staff. The European Union remained committed to the work of UNHCR and continued its generous support. However, the funding gap pointed to the need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of UNHCR operations, especially in the follow-up to the World Humanitarian Summit and the commitments under the Grand Bargain, which emphasized the need for reforms by both donors and implementers to ensure renewed trust, transparency and efficiency. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants had given a new impetus to the international community's work by reasserting the validity of international refugee law and underlined the centrality of global responsibility-sharing and international solidarity among States when addressing refugee situations. The global campaign against racism and xenophobia should sensitize the citizens of countries receiving asylum seekers, including European Union countries, to the core human values that guided the commitment to protect those fleeing conflict and persecution. The European Union and its member States were committed to the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

60. **Ms. Holmes** (United States of America) said that her country would be contributing an unprecedented \$1.5 billion to UNHCR in 2016. However, the needs continued to grow. The international community had demonstrated its resolve to address the current challenges at various important meetings in 2016, including the World Humanitarian Summit, the high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants and the Leaders' Summit on Refugees. It was now necessary to follow through on the commitments made, while simultaneously working to end the conflicts that were giving rise to the humanitarian needs.

61. Partnerships were vital, and had been a common theme of those meetings. The United States was pleased that UNHCR was working with partners and Governments to improve the self-reliance of refugee communities and the prospects for durable solutions. Coordination among all humanitarian actors was critical; her delegation looked forward to regular discussions with UNHCR on how it was instituting its Grand Bargain commitments, both inside the Office

and in cooperation with others. Effective monitoring and oversight were also essential in order to ensure quality control and consistency across regions and provide adequate technical staff to field operations. Diligent monitoring of service delivery to persons of concern was critical at the country, regional and headquarters level. UNHCR must continue to strengthen its organizational capacity by pursuing a human resources policy that delivered a strong performance in emergency situations. The United States was pleased that UNHCR was strengthening its internal capacities, including by investing in its workforce and developing more efficient systems. As new opportunities emerged, such as engaging development and other non-traditional actors, UNHCR must maintain the centrality of protection and its emergency response capacity. When a new emergency arose, solutions should be sought from outset, even if they seemed elusive.

62. The year 2016 marked the sixty-fifth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention and its 1967 Protocol had never been more relevant; the world must not turn its back on others at their time of greatest need.

63. *Mr. Glossner (Germany), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

64. **Mr. Cerutti** (Switzerland) said that his country wished to stress the importance of complying with the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as regional instruments and customary international law. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was merely a starting point in addressing the issues. Switzerland would be closely following the development of pilot frameworks for action and urged UNHCR to select a variety of contexts, ranging from protracted refugee situations to mixed situations and situations involving return movements. It looked forward to the establishment of the global compact on refugees.

65. Given that internally displaced persons often found themselves in situations of extreme vulnerability, and many of them became refugees, it was critical to address the root causes of displacement and take action to prevent successive displacements. Her delegation therefore welcomed the approach taken by UNHCR aimed at ensuring a more robust and predictable collective response and supporting States in developing and implementing an appropriate national political and

legislative framework based on international norms and standards. Preventing displacement was essential; forced displacement could be reduced through better compliance with international humanitarian law, including the principles relating to the conduct of hostilities, by all parties to armed conflicts. The human rights of the displaced must be upheld, and should be better integrated into the search for solutions, especially since human rights violations often served as an early warning sign of instability. It was therefore essential to reaffirm the importance of protection as a central pillar of the work of UNHCR.

66. Since over half the more than 60 million forcibly displaced persons were children or young people, it was very important for them to participate in decision-making. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the initiatives taken by UNHCR and the organization, along with the Women's Refugee Commission, of the Global Refugee Youth Consultations. Forced displacement was a challenge that called for coordinated action from all humanitarian, development, human rights and peacebuilding actors. Such action should address the root causes and must be based on the international protection regime and meet the aspirations of the persons concerned. New initiatives that promoted local solutions and involved refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities in the planning and fulfilment of commitments were particularly promising.

67. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina), welcoming the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants as a significant step forward, said that the rise in the number of displaced persons was an alarming trend, in particular since very few people had been able to return home in 2016. Developing countries were disproportionately affected by large-scale refugee movements, and the search for solutions must be guided by the principle of solidarity. In addition, the international system for protecting refugees was severely underfunded. The adoption of a global compact on refugees in 2018 would help in developing suitable frameworks to reinforce the progress made.

68. The General Assembly had been recognizing the contribution of the White Helmets for over 20 years. In May 2016, they had travelled to Lebanon to provide assistance at a refugee camp in Syria. Argentina had a

humanitarian visa programme, which facilitated the entry of people affected by the Syrian conflict. There were granted a residence permit and had the same civil rights as all other residents, giving them access to employment and education.

69. There was no prospect of an end to war and violence in the medium term. For that reason, it was vital to step up the humanitarian response by, in particular, improving conditions in refugee camps and upholding the most basic rights of the inhabitants. A human rights-based approach must be taken, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, older persons and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Lastly, political resolve was needed to cooperate in promoting peace and sustainable development in order to address the underlying factors contributing to the rising numbers of people fleeing their homes.

70. **Mr. Ruiz Blanco** (Colombia) said that 6.9 million people had been internally displaced in Colombia as a result of the internal armed conflict since 1985. Addressing the needs of such a large population represented an immense challenge, but steps were being taken to improve their situation and quality of life. Since the adoption of the 2011 law on victims, his Government had initiated a transition from assistance-based support to social inclusion.

71. More than 600,000 victims had received reparations but they represented only a fraction of the total. Considerable support had been received through international cooperation and UNHCR had been a key partner through the establishment of multi-year plans. Colombia had also been working on lasting solutions that restored people's dignity by offering them access to services such as housing, health care and education. As the High Commissioner had seen during his visit to Colombia in July 2016, such solutions required coordination between national entities, leadership from local authorities, the participation of the victims and international cooperation.

72. **Mr. Saikal** (Afghanistan) said that Afghanistan was one of the leading countries of origin for refugees worldwide due to four decades of political instability. There were four categories of Afghan nationals associated with the refugee crisis. Firstly, there were those who had recently arrived in Europe or were trying to enter a European country, either legally or

illegally, leaving Afghanistan as a result of terrorism, extremism and proxy wars. They had taken great risks in leaving, and were often exploited by traffickers. Shutting the door to them would be a violation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and would fuel hatred and, ultimately, radicalization among disenfranchised youth. Secondly, there were those who wanted to leave Afghanistan as a result of security concerns or endemic poverty and widespread unemployment, and were busy making arrangements to that end.

73. Thirdly, there were refugees who had lived in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan or Iran for long periods, and needed an opportunity for voluntary, gradual and dignified repatriation; and fourthly, there were members of the Afghan diaspora, who had settled in host countries, especially in the West, and feared retribution for terrorist attacks carried out around the world. When a terrorist attack occurred, members of the diaspora often faced a backlash from right-wing and Islamophobic groups. Discrimination based on religion and race was a global scourge; everyone should work together to counteract stereotyping of Afghan communities and to foster interfaith and cross-cultural networks.

74. **Mr. Gotyaev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation believed that, in order to resolve the problems faced by refugees, it was essential above all to prevent and resolve conflicts, coordinate the efforts of the international community and ensure that humanitarian assistance and the promotion of development were mutually reinforcing. The recent sharp increase in the number of displaced persons had largely been caused by irresponsible intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign States, with the goal of destabilizing countries and bringing about regime change. States which had contributed to the occurrence of those crises should bear the main responsibility for resolving the consequences, including migration.

75. His country had received the second highest number of refugees and displaced persons and was thus very experienced in welcoming and integrating them. It was gradually improving its legislation on migration and developing a comprehensive asylum system for foreigners and stateless persons, including through a bill to optimize the time frame and procedures for asylum. To date, the Russian Federation had welcomed

1 million Ukrainian citizens who had fled Ukraine following the internal armed conflict, over 400,000 of whom had acquired the status of refugee or been granted temporary asylum. His Government also intended to continue receiving Syrian and Afghan asylum seekers, in view of the situation in the Middle and Far East. The Russian Federation paid particular attention to the social infrastructure for displaced persons and their integration into society.

76. His delegation appreciated the role of UNHCR in enhancing the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. The Russian Federation would continue to offer the Office its comprehensive support, especially in the context of the current unprecedented scale of migration. It was crucial, however, to step up cooperation at the international level. In that regard, he welcomed the leading role assigned to UNHCR in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. He urged the Office to take action only with the consent of host States and in line with the principles of neutrality, humanity, independence and impartiality; to promote a responsible attitude to the institution of asylum; and to fulfil its mandate in an unpoliticized manner.

77. **Mr. Almabruk** (Libya) said that, while his country continued to welcome and offer employment to large numbers of migrants, the massive flows of irregular migrants through Libyan territory en route to Europe, and the activities of migrant smugglers and human traffickers had exacerbated instability in the country and were posing increasingly serious social, economic and social challenges for his Government.

78. Despite the limited resources at its disposal, his Government was striving to uphold migrant's rights, and was working with the International Organization for Migration to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of irregular migrants. Libya was also working closely with the European Union to combat illegal migration and save lives in the Mediterranean. It was, however, increasingly clear that focusing solely on the security aspects of irregular migration was unlikely to stem migration flows. Instead, comprehensive development strategies were needed to combat poverty and reduce unemployment in migrants' countries of origin. The international community must redouble its efforts to address the root causes of all forms of displacement, which included armed conflict, poverty, hunger and

unemployment. In that regard, his delegation underscored the importance of implementing the action plan agreed at the Valletta Summit on Migration, held in November 2015, which, inter alia, had established an emergency trust fund to address the root causes of destabilization, forced displacement and irregular migration in Africa.

79. His delegation called on all States to redouble their efforts to uphold the human rights of refugees and migrants and combat discrimination, social ostracism and hatred. He urged the international community to facilitate the return of migrants to their homes, which Libya believed was most appropriate solution to the migrant crisis.

80. **Mr. Duarte** (Brazil) said that the High Commissioner had placed appropriate emphasis on the principle of non-refoulement; his country agreed that deviations from international protection principles had resulted in inadequate management of large-scale migrations. Responsibility for managing migration should be shared through increased support to host countries in the developing world and through innovative measures to expand pathways to admission.

81. Brazil was doing its part by providing universal access to employment, public education and health care for refugees even before their status as such was recognized. The number of asylum requests received by his Government had increased dramatically over the previous five years, and the refugee population was expected to grow by nearly 60 per cent by the end of 2017. Brazil had addressed migration and refugee issues through innovative measures, such as humanitarian visas offered to Syrians affected by the conflict in their country and to Haitians displaced by the 2010 earthquake.

82. In 2014, the Latin American and Caribbean countries had adopted the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, which covered situations that were not addressed by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, including displacement caused by disasters and organized crime. Brazil had increased its collaboration with UNHCR, which had opened a second office in São Paulo in recognition of growing refugee flows into Brazil.

83. **Mr. Amolo** (Kenya) said that sub-Saharan Africa, which hosted the majority of refugees, continued to

bear the socioeconomic consequences of that role, against the backdrop of diminishing hope for political solutions. As highlighted in the High Commissioner's report, the response to the displacement crisis had been disappointing, with some countries closing borders, erecting fences and passing restrictive legislation to dissuade arrivals, including criminalization of entry, detention and seizure of assets. It was clear that the framework designed to respond to the refugee crisis had become ineffective. The reality of growing fear, discrimination and rejection of people who needed compassion, protection and assistance must be confronted.

84. Kenya had hosted refugees and displaced persons, mostly from Somalia, since its independence. Lack of support from the international community had left Kenya with the world's largest refugee camp, the Dadaab refugee complex. The terrorist attacks that had taken place at Westgate and Garissa University had been planned and executed from that complex, which was a legitimate security concern that deserved a response. Nevertheless, Kenya had continued to pursue a liberal policy with respect to the admission of refugees and would continue to ensure the protection of refugees through application of the provisions of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the African Union Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, Kenya's own Refugee Act of 2006. Kenya was pleased that the Government of Somalia had affirmed its readiness to receive its nationals within the framework of the tripartite agreement entered into by Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR, and the presence of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia continued to guarantee the safety of returnees.

85. *Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) resumed the Chair.*

86. **Mr. Qassem Agha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Syrian refugee crisis was yet another instance of Governments exploiting the suffering of the Syrian people. Those same Governments had used the humanitarian crisis in Syria as a political weapon aimed at toppling the Syrian State and transforming it into a failed State in order to unleash chaos. The founder of Wikileaks had claimed in an interview with the PrESS Project that the mass exodus from Syria was a part of a United States strategy against the Syrian Government, because voiding the country of its

inhabitants, particularly the educated, would bring it to the brink of destruction. The European "open door" policy therefore supported the policy of the United States.

87. Everyone had seen how Turkey had used Syrian refugees as an excuse to pressure the member States of the European Union to expedite Turkey's European Union accession process while at the same time violating the human rights of refugees, especially children, in Turkish camps. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian children under the age of 7 were deprived of education in Turkey and worked 12 hours a day for a pittance, making textiles for Western brands. European reports showed that only 20 per cent of all refugees in Europe were from Syria. He wondered why, during the September 2016 Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis, the representative of Saudi Arabia said that his country was hosting 2.5 million Syrian refugees, when it was indicated in table 1 of the High Commissioner's report (A/71/12) that there were only 118 refugees in Saudi Arabia and 120 in Qatar.

88. Some States professed to care about refugees while actively harming them through support for terrorists. Since the beginning of the refugee crisis some States had mobilized mafia gangs on the seas, walled off their borders to prevent refugees from entering, and subjected refugees to abusive treatment.

89. There was a clear answer to the questions of how to ensure that more Syrians did not leave their homes and how refugees could be helped to return home. Terrorism against the Syrian people must be stopped, and Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015) should be implemented. Furthermore, the unilateral measures taken by certain Governments against the Syrian people, which had paralyzed the economy, destroyed infrastructure, closed hundreds of factories and increased unemployment, must be ended.

90. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) said that her country supported the High Commissioner's appeal for increased support to host countries, including financial support, and welcomed the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which had rightly drawn attention to the importance of an international strategy to respond to the issue of refugees and migrants. In that regard, Tunisia wished to highlight the plight of Palestinian refugees, recalling

once again their right to return and the necessity of a just and sustainable solution to that issue.

91. Tunisia was one of the host countries that had kept its borders open and had showed remarkable generosity to those in need. Such generosity had come with political and socioeconomic consequences and many difficulties, but they would in no way prevent Tunisia from providing assistance. In May 2015, Tunisia had actively participated in the World Humanitarian Summit; it called on the international community to honour the commitments undertaken there to build solid partnerships in order to anticipate and respond to the needs of all persons seeking humanitarian assistance, particularly migrants and refugees.

92. Tunisia, as a host country as well as a country of origin and a transit country, was in the process of crafting a national strategy to manage internal migration. His Government had amended its legislation relating to internal migration concerning the right to work and the right of residence in line with international instruments ratified by Tunisia, and had also amended legislation regarding foreign students, to make it easier for them to procure employment and internships in Tunisia. Protection was offered to the most vulnerable migrants, such as children, women and persons with special needs, and a national employment database for foreigners had been created. In addition, people working in areas related to refugee and migrant issues had received appropriate training.

93. **Mr. al-Banwan** (Kuwait) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about the rapid rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons in many parts of the world. In order to significantly reduce migration flows, it was vital for the international community and specialized international organizations to accord greater attention to resolving existing conflicts, preventing the outbreak of new conflicts, improving living conditions in developing countries and addressing the impact of natural disasters and climate change. In that connection, Kuwait strongly supported the commitments set forth in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

94. The crisis in Syria was one of the greatest contemporary challenges facing the international community. More than 130,000 Syrians had sought shelter in his country — equivalent to 10 per cent of

the total number of Kuwaiti citizens. Over the previous five years, Kuwait had hosted three international donor conferences to support humanitarian efforts in Syria at which States had pledged more than \$7 billion in aid; his delegation noted with satisfaction that donor States had honoured over 90 per cent of the financial commitments they had made at those conferences. Kuwait had also co-hosted the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference, held in London in February 2016. His country had, moreover, provided more than \$2 billion over the previous five years to support refugees and internally displaced persons around the world and was, inter alia, funding educational and health-care projects for internally displaced persons in Syria and Syrian refugees who had fled their homeland. Kuwait had pledged to provide a further \$176 million to support educational, health-care and development projects for Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons that were coordinated by United Nations humanitarian agencies and Kuwaiti charitable institutions. It was also providing financial support to educational projects run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

95. **Ms. Burapachaisri** (Thailand) said that the current crisis required a global response based on the principle of equitable international burden-sharing. Host countries, of which 85 per cent were low-middle income countries, must be provided with additional funding to enable them to provide adequate protection and assistance to those in need. It was crucial to distinguish people with genuine protection needs from economic migrants, and to provide development assistance to host countries as well as countries of origin as a means to tackle the root causes of displacement and arrive at sustainable long-term solutions.

96. Although the prospects of return remained bleak for refugees around the world, his country had been working closely with Myanmar to prepare for the voluntary return of displaced persons from Myanmar. A week earlier, the first pilot group had returned to Myanmar, thanks to cooperation from the Government of that country and to the support of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. Thailand hoped that that achievement would pave the way for all displaced persons to return home in a safe, voluntary and sustainable manner. Thailand was also working with UNHCR to issue birth certificates to all displaced

children from Myanmar who were still in temporary shelters in Thailand so that they would not be stateless.

97. Thailand was enacting a law on the prevention and suppression of torture and forced disappearances with a view to strengthening the implementation of the principle of non-refoulement. In an effort to prevent and end statelessness, Thailand had granted citizenship to over 18,000 stateless persons over the preceding three years. It had also improved measures to facilitate applications for Thai nationality for stateless students in remote areas of Thailand. Thailand also looked forward to working with UNHCR to elaborate the global compact on refugees.

98. **Ms. Agladze** (Georgia) stressed the need to address the consequences of forced displacement in a humanitarian context, and to tackle the root causes of displacement and prevent the escalation of conflict situations. For over two decades, her country had been suffering from the burden of forced displacement as the result of the occupation of 20 per cent of its territory and several waves of ethnic cleansing conducted by the occupying Power. Hundreds of thousands of Georgian internally displaced persons and refugees were prevented from returning to their homes, despite calls from the international community for their return, and the country was facing an imminent threat of another wave of forced displacement as a result of alarming developments taking place in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Those developments included discriminatory measures such as restrictions on Georgian-language education and the installation of razor-wire fences and other artificial obstacles along the occupation line.

99. Georgia was grateful to UNHCR for its continuous support in elaborating better policies for the displaced population and overcoming existing challenges within the occupied territories. UNHCR had carried out an assessment mission in the occupied Tskhinvali region in August 2016 in cooperation with her Government. The visit had been of particular importance given the persistent ethnically-based violence against the local population and no international presence on the ground. In 2015, UNHCR had conducted a survey that had concluded that the vast majority of Georgian internally displaced persons were willing to return to their homes voluntarily. Unfortunately, their right to return continued to be

denied and their humanitarian needs continued to be politicized by the Russian Federation. Given the unprecedented levels of forced displacement, it was vital for UNHCR staff to be given unimpeded access to territories and populations affected by conflict.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.