



General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
17 January 2019

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 41st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 31 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan)
later: Mr. Molina Linares (Vice-Chair) (Guatemala)

Contents

Agenda item 65: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

18-18284 (E)



Please recycle



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

Agenda item 65: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (A/73/12 (Part I), A/73/12 (Part II), A/73/12/Add.1 and A/73/340)

1. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing his report (A/73/12 (Part I), A/73/12 (Part II) and A/73/12/Add.1), said that the granting of asylum was one of the most ancient gestures of solidarity in the history of humanity. Recently, however, political discourse had given licence to discrimination, racism and xenophobia against refugees and migrants, branding those who had been uprooted from their homes as a threat. Consequently, refugees were turned back at borders, imprisoned or left to perish at sea.

2. The intersection of conflict and violence-related displacement with other factors such as climate change, poverty and inequality had generated complex population flows that were difficult to address. Neighbouring countries had struggled to absorb new arrivals and address the impact on services, infrastructure, labour markets and the environment. The flow of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh was a case in point. While the people of Bangladesh had responded with generosity and compassion, investment was needed to improve economic opportunities, local infrastructure and essential services for both refugees and host communities. The Government of Myanmar must address the root causes of the crisis and must accelerate the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed by it, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme.

3. Although the prospect of Syrian refugee repatriation was in sight, the situation on the ground was not yet able to support voluntary, dignified and sustainable return. UNHCR would support return when the situation improved, but, in the meantime, it was helping to foster a conducive environment. Countries across the Middle East region hosted 5.6 million Syrian refugees, and although donors had been generous, funding remained insufficient.

4. Thousands of African refugees and migrants continued to travel across the Mediterranean from Libya. While the Libyan Coast Guard had been reinforced in an effort to reduce arrivals in Europe, other Libyan institutions had not received similar support. Migrants were thus sent back to Libyan shores, where they were exposed to exploitation and detention in

horrific conditions. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had offered assistance in such cases, but stability must be restored in Libya.

5. Since 2015, more than 1.9 million people had left Venezuela, the largest population movement in the recent history of Latin America. In a recent visit to the country, the High Commissioner had seen how neighbouring countries had generously kept their borders open, providing asylum or other protection-based stay arrangements. UNHCR, together with IOM, had established a regional interagency coordination platform and had appointed a Joint Special Representative to work with Governments and other stakeholders to build regional partnerships and support host countries.

6. Refugee participation in political processes such as peace negotiations and elections could help restore their connections with their countries. A recent dialogue in Khartoum between South Sudanese refugee representatives and signatories of the peace agreement had been encouraging and must continue. Recent talks between Eritrea and Ethiopia were also welcome and would perhaps lead to solutions to displacement issues in the Horn of Africa.

7. The capacity of UNHCR to adapt to new realities in the field was critical to its ability to respond to displacement crises. The Office had embarked on a new phase of its reform process and would thus move towards a decentralized model over the next two years in an effort to strengthen country offices. Regional bureaux would be moved from Geneva to their respective regions and key systems and processes would be simplified. Furthermore, in 2017, 21 per cent of the programme expenditure of UNHCR had been allocated to local and national responders, up from 19 per cent in 2016. Those changes were in line with broader United Nations reforms.

8. Despite its commitment to integrity, UNHCR operated in fluid, high-risk environments, where the potential for fraud, corruption, exploitation and abuse were sometimes heightened. The High Commissioner was committed to tackling those and other forms of misconduct. In 2018, a new initiative had been launched to integrate additional risk management expertise in certain operations and oversight architecture had been improved.

9. The application in 15 countries of the comprehensive refugee response framework was bearing fruit, and the global compact on refugees would accelerate that progress by placing the dignity, rights and aspirations of refugees and their hosts at the centre

of a fairer response. The traditional practice of keeping refugees in camps, away from the general population, was giving way to an inclusive new approach that allowed refugees to contribute to their new communities while they awaited a solution to their plight.

10. States had taken humane decisions to review their laws and policies and expand access to national programmes, labour markets and social protection systems. The collective efforts of the World Bank, bilateral development entities and regional and international financial institutions had mobilized some \$6.5 billion of development funding for refugees and host communities. The private sector, faith groups, sport organizations and municipalities had also made efforts to assist refugees. The financial sector had increasingly recognized that refugees were a market for services such as bank accounts and business loans. Progress had also been made with respect to access to education, with primary school enrolment for refugee children rising from 50 per cent in 2015 to 61 per cent in 2017. While the High Commissioner was deeply grateful for the funds it received from donors, the growing gap between humanitarian need and available resources would reach 45 per cent in 2018.

11. The global compact on refugees, a powerful expression of multilateralism, would be the first compact of its kind in over 50 years. It reflected a balance of the interests of hosting countries, donors and others, and was informed by decades of experience in addressing refugee crises. Moreover, it could help bring attention back to the dignity, rights and shared humanity of the world's refugee population.

12. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) said that her country was committed to leading the world in humanitarian assistance efforts, as close to refugees' homes as possible until they could return home safely, voluntarily and with dignity. The United States was the single largest donor of humanitarian assistance worldwide, providing almost \$1.5 billion in 2018 to UNHCR alone. Despite such contributions, the gap between needs and resources was growing; therefore, more must be done to share burdens, promote refugee self-reliance and end conflicts.

13. The United States welcomed the efforts of Latin American countries that had opened their doors to the unprecedented outflow of over 2 million Venezuelans. In Africa, Ethiopia was finalizing a legally binding proclamation to expand refugees' access to jobs, education and other basic services, and the Government had recently allowed refugees to obtain vital documents. In the Middle East, the Government of Jordan had issued 87,000 work permits to Syrians. Further examples of

progress could be seen in Turkey with respect to its hosting of Syrian refugees and the Thai initiative to grant citizenship to over 30,000 stateless persons.

14. The United States commended UNHCR for its important reform efforts in the areas of transparency and accountability. It pledged to work with other Governments, the United Nations, the private sector and civil society organizations to increase the effectiveness of the humanitarian system.

15. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that the report of the High Commissioner underlined the enormous scale of forced displacement worldwide. By the end of 2017, some 68.5 million persons had been displaced, 85 per cent of whom were hosted in low- and middle-income countries. The human tragedy of displacement was compounded by the financial and socioeconomic hardships experienced by host communities. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, an important milestone on the path to a more effective response to mass displacements, called on Member States to ease the burden on host countries through equitable sharing of responsibility. UNHCR, in establishing the global compact on refugees and launching the comprehensive refugee response framework, had furthered the goals of the Declaration.

16. In line with the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey sought to promote efficient cooperation between humanitarian and development actors. In that regard, it had provided assistance to displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa. The country was host to almost 4 million persons, mostly Syrians, displaced by regional conflicts, making Turkey host to the largest refugee population in the world.

17. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that, regarding displacement from the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras), Mexico was working with UNHCR to ensure that its asylum system was more humane and efficient, able to uphold the rights of asylum seekers and refugees and meet their needs. Within the context of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS), UNHCR was supporting Mexico in identifying and registering applicants and providing information on their right to apply for asylum. Mexico had also recently implemented the programme "Estás en tu casa", through which refugees could seek temporary employment and receive an individual registration number, enabling them to gain access to public services and shelter.

18. **Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the responsibility for assisting refugees should not be borne solely by a few countries based on

their geographical proximity to countries of origin. The hospitality offered over the previous decades by a few developing countries should not be taken for granted and was no excuse for other States to evade their responsibilities. At a time when the very countries whose policies had created large refugee populations were closing their doors, the global compact on refugees should serve as means to promote solidarity among Member States through concrete support for host countries and communities.

19. **Mr. Alajmi** (Qatar) said that his country commended the Office of the High Commissioner for his efforts in developing the global compact on refugees, which provided the basis for the equitable and flexible sharing of burdens among all Member States. In that regard, Qatar, in line with its firm belief in humanitarian principles, had continued to offer humanitarian assistance through its governmental and civil society institutions and in cooperation with United Nations agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In addition, Qatar wished to stress the importance of enhancing the access of refugees to national educational systems and of removing obstacles that prevented refugee children from enrolling in vocational training programmes.

20. **Ms. Niculae** (Romania) said that her delegation commended the efforts of UNHCR to develop the global compact on refugees, as the global challenge of forced displacement required a collective response. The adoption and implementation of the compact would offer hope to those who had been forced to flee their homes and would enhance support for host communities through predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing. As a donor, a relocation State and a promoter of the humanitarian agenda, Romania was committed to the protection and support of refugees.

21. **Mr. Melad** (Libya) said that his delegation agreed with the report with respect to the need for stability in Libya and wished to remind the international community of its commitments in that regard. Stable conditions would attract labour to the country, which would make dangerous Mediterranean crossings unnecessary for those who crossed the desert on their journeys north. Furthermore, once the appropriate conditions were in place, Libya would be able to increase its foreign investments, thereby providing job opportunities for migrants in their countries of origin and saving their lives.

22. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that his delegation concurred with the assessment of the High Commissioner that the generosity of host communities must be matched by more predictable and timely support

and agreed that the global compact on refugees charted an irreversible path towards that goal. The compact had struck a balance between voluntary participation and the legitimate calls for States to develop a robust responsibility-sharing framework. Current challenges required a new commitment to multilateralism.

23. **Mr. Lee Jooil** (Republic of Korea) said that States must redouble their joint efforts to address the grave challenges resulting from new humanitarian crises. The Republic of Korea welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to reach a broad and durable consensus on the global compact on refugees, a document that would provide a sound basis for a more comprehensive and coordinated strategy in dealing with the global refugee crisis.

24. During the High Commissioner's recent visit to the Republic of Korea, he and the Government had candidly discussed refugee issues and reaffirmed their strong cooperation. The Republic of Korea appreciated the tailored guidance provided by UNHCR to Member States dealing with refugee protection issues. It had increased its financial contributions in support of refugees and had doubled its annual quota as part of its pilot resettlement programme for the 2018–2019 period. It was particularly important to address refugees with special protection needs, such as women and victims of sexual violence.

25. **Mr. Furumoto** (Japan) said that his Government welcomed the leadership and constructive engagement by UNHCR and Member States in the drafting of the global compact on refugees and looked forward to its practical implementation. Japan attached particular importance to the comprehensive refugee response framework, an integral part of the compact, and commended those host countries that were implementing it.

26. Japan placed great importance on linking humanitarian activities with development work. In Zambia, UNHCR and the Japan International Cooperation Agency had worked together to support refugees and facilitate their local integration. In that regard, his delegation was interested in hearing the High Commissioner's plans for future expansions of collaborative efforts with multilateral and bilateral development partners.

27. **Mr. Sparber** (Liechtenstein) said that according to the report, the largest and fastest-growing humanitarian emergency in the Asia-Pacific region was the flight of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh, where they lived in overcrowded camps with limited infrastructure and services. Many arrived in worrying physical and mental condition. The report rightly mentioned the

generosity of the people of Bangladesh in hosting those refugees. What could the international community do to improve their situation, especially of those living in Cox's Bazar, and what needed to be done to facilitate their safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return to Myanmar?

28. **Mr. Fernández-Zincke** (Observer for the European Union) said that his delegation supported the global compact on refugees as an important manifestation of the political will to strengthen solidarity with refugees and host communities and commended UNHCR for the inclusive, transparent and comprehensive process that had led to its development. Over the previous two years, the practical application of the comprehensive refugee response framework had generated concrete results for refugees and host communities, and the European Union now looked forward to the implementation of the compact through the adoption of the UNHCR omnibus resolution by the General Assembly. That would signal an important shift towards a new way of working on refugee protection. The European Union and its Member States were proud to collectively be the largest humanitarian donor, accounting for over half of global humanitarian funding.

29. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that the 2017 exodus of refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh mentioned in the report was of course the result of violence following terrorist attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on security forces. Myanmar was deeply concerned about displaced persons, especially women and children. The Government had signed three bilateral agreements with Bangladesh and had undertaken the preparations necessary for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons. In June, Myanmar had signed a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and had granted those agencies access to 49 villages so that assessments could be carried out.

30. Currently, the joint Myanmar-Bangladesh working group was visiting Cox's Bazar to decide on a repatriation timeline and had met with displaced persons to inform them of the ongoing preparations in Rakhine State for their return. However, the previous day, a spokesperson for the Secretary-General had stated that conditions in Rakhine were not yet conducive to return. Such pessimism was not constructive.

31. **Ms. Alfeine** (Comoros), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the global compact on refugees could result in more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing with countries that continued to host large numbers of refugees. The Group noted with

concern the funding gap of 51 per cent for refugee operations in Africa for 2018, which continued to affect the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Unearmarked funds were crucial to give UNHCR the flexibility to respond to complex emergencies. The provision of development assistance to host countries in the context of the comprehensive refugee response framework must also be strengthened.

32. Resettlement was an important protection tool and the Group urged Member States in a position to do so to expand opportunities for resettlement as a means of preventing dangerous secondary movements. Sustainable voluntary repatriation and reintegration was the preferred solution for refugee situations. It required humanitarian assistance that went beyond repatriation, coupled with strong collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in countries of origin and host countries. The Group encouraged the international community to provide meaningful support to those efforts and UNHCR to continue to play its catalytic role.

33. The recent increase in mixed movements of migrants and refugees, by land and by sea, required urgent attention. Far more must be done by destination countries to expand legal channels for migration in order to reduce the number of people undertaking fatal journeys. Member States must also provide humanitarian assistance regardless of migration status. In that connection, the Group implored UNHCR to collaborate closely with IOM and other humanitarian actors to respond to such mixed movements.

34. **Ms. Melfald** (Norway) said that the global compact for refugees was a new approach to global refugee response. Norway was very pleased to see that the compact built on the principles of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and set out guidelines for their implementation. The challenge was to increase support and achieve results on ground. Tremendous steps forward had been taken by the countries applying the comprehensive refugee response framework; they were setting an example for other Member States to follow.

35. Norway looked forward to the first global refugee forum in 2019, which should be seized as an opportunity to mobilize more States in support of refugee assistance and protection. For too long, the major host countries had shouldered the burden with support from a small number of donors. More States needed to step up. Her delegation wondered how to increase the number of countries participating in resettlement programmes and ensure meaningful participation, including through pledging by non-governmental organizations and development partners. Norway was particularly

encouraged by the cooperation between UNHCR and the World Bank over the past few years; her country would like to see the World Bank play a strong role, not only in the implementation of the global compact for refugees but also in tracking the fulfilment of pledges and preparing statistics for future stocktaking exercises.

36. **Mr. Gallagher** (Ireland) said that, at a time when multilateral approaches to problems were sometimes questioned, his country believed that a durable solution could only be found by working together. Ireland remained a vocal advocate for a strong and universally supported compact. Its model of responsibility- and burden-sharing could deliver positive outcomes for refugees and their host communities. Fully implementing the compact would help address the new types of refugee movements, and, as a donor, Ireland saw a significant advantage in a compact that was universally affirmed and implemented. With a view to building on the lessons learned from the New York Declaration and the comprehensive refugee response framework, and with agreement on the global compact on refugees in sight, he asked what the next steps would be in its implementation.

37. **Ms. Faizzad** (Afghanistan) said that she wished to assure the High Commissioner of her delegation's full support and cooperation. In recent years, the global refugee crisis had worsened. Afghanistan had adhered to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the New York Declaration and other international instruments on refugees and internally displaced persons. She asked what other joint measures were needed to address the plight of refugees, besides tackling root causes.

38. **Mr. Christodoulidis** (Greece) said that, since the start of the crisis, Greece had demonstrated its long-standing commitment to provide an effective response and fulfil its international obligations as a host country, guided by the principles of solidarity and humanity. In close cooperation with UNHCR and the European Union, Greece had improved its legal and institutional framework. It had accelerated the process of granting asylum and implemented a national strategy for the integration of refugees, which was facilitated by providing access to Greek language courses, vocational training and public education. Local communities had welcomed refugees and asylum seekers warmly. As indicated in the report, coordinated and collective action would be needed, together with timely and predictable support from the international community based on the principles of solidarity, and burden- and responsibility-sharing. The global compact for refugees would serve as an instrument for multilateral action on advancing refugee protection.

39. **Mr. Grout-Smith** (United Kingdom) said that the global compact on refugees would provide a more sustainable and effective response to forced displacement. It would boost refugees' self-reliance, support generous host communities and improve burden- and responsibility-sharing. It would give priority to jobs, education and better services for everyone affected by the refugee crisis, which would make it for refugees to build a decent life closer to home and make it easier for them to return and rebuild in their home country. Responding to refugee displacement was a global responsibility and his delegation called on others to step up, since it must not be left to a handful of donor and host countries. The United Kingdom supported the aims of the compact and the first global refugee forum would provide an important platform to help widen the support base and deliver the pledges needed to respond to the challenge. It was in the interests of all to ensure a more equitable response.

40. **Ms. Betaouaf** (Algeria) said that the report did not discuss the effect of refugees on host countries, but instead emphasized the role of donor countries. Therefore, the following year's report should contain a study of the economic and social effects on hosts, especially those that had received large numbers of refugees over a long period of time. The report, in its discussion of the assistance provided to refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa, did not pay sufficient attention to North Africa, which was considered a refuge for those fleeing conflicts and a transit point for those hoping to reach Europe. Algeria hoped that that topic would be included in the next report.

41. Although UNHCR had visited camps for Sahrawi refugees and had attempted to ascertain their numbers in 2017, the report nevertheless included outdated figures and statistics. Her delegation therefore hoped that the High Commissioner would cover that issue in the next report.

42. **Mr. Ajayi** (Nigeria) said that his delegation had been pleased to see that the report recognized that a number of internally displaced persons had been able to return to their homes in Nigeria. His country was deeply committed to the comprehensive rehabilitation of internally displaced persons. The Buhari Plan was a plan of action to promote and enhance the welfare of those affected and represented the largest national rehabilitation and reconstruction programme in Africa. Nigeria also commended the High Commissioner for recognizing the value of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as a collective document that would facilitate understanding of the need to

mainstream the human rights of migrants throughout the international development agenda regardless of status.

43. **Ms. Goebel** (Germany) said that the report was a testimony to the tireless efforts of UNHCR to provide protection and assistance to the forcibly displaced and stateless. Her delegation had the deepest respect for all UNHCR staff, who often worked in difficult and dangerous environments. There were record numbers of persons of concern; humanitarian and protection needs were immense and complex, and access to those most in need of assistance remained limited. She commended the continuing hospitality of major host countries and welcomed the considerable progress made by countries applying the comprehensive refugee response framework. Germany had assumed its share of responsibility by supporting refugees and host communities worldwide and by increasing its resettlement quota and hosting refugees. The country would continue to contribute its share.

44. **Ms. Bouchikhi** (Morocco) asked how UNHCR viewed the process for the compact going forward. She welcomed UNHCR efforts to strengthen coordination with Member States and asked how the organization envisaged strengthening its regional offices. She also wondered what action UNHCR had taken to register refugees in camps.

45. **Ms. Habtemariam** (Ethiopia) said that international protection of refugees and the search for new approaches and durable solutions should be guided by the principle of equitable responsibility-sharing. The proposed global compact on refugees, which Ethiopia fully supported, would be instrumental in translating that principle into action and should serve as a framework for achieving the four objectives of the comprehensive refugee response framework.

46. Ethiopia was currently experiencing a 75 per cent funding gap, which was having a serious impact on its efforts to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and livelihood opportunities for refugees and host communities alike. Maintaining the capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies and provide life-saving assistance should remain central while searching for solutions. She hoped that the global compact would enable Ethiopia to address some of the serious protection challenges resulting from funding gaps. Development assistance from the World Bank and others could also be expanded to countries of origin, which would enable Ethiopia to ensure sustainable return and reintegration. Regarding resettlement, Ethiopia encouraged the use of different types of admission, in particular family reunification, as a means

of providing international protection in the context of the proposed global compact on refugees.

47. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts mobilized by UNHCR in support of more than a million refugees and forcibly displaced persons from Rakhine State who had fled to Bangladesh. The voluntary return of individuals verified by Myanmar was due to begin shortly and UNHCR would play a critical role in determining the voluntariness of returns. He asked for the High Commissioner's views on whether conditions in Rakhine State were conducive to return, following the initial assessment conducted by the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR in 23 villages. Bangladesh was concerned about the disproportionate burden for refugees borne by poorer countries and the shrinking of resettlement space. As a host country in a protracted refugee situation, his country was interested in the work being undertaken to develop a methodology for measuring and mapping donor and host country contributions based on empirical evidence. Lastly, he asked how the new Division of Resilience and Solutions would help address inequities in burden-sharing and persistent funding gaps.

48. **Ms. Nordlund** (Sweden) said that the report had provided inspiration for changes in the omnibus resolution, which was being facilitated by her delegation. While appreciating the topics listed under protection, she suggested that a reference to men and boys could be included the following year in relation to the measures to counter sexual and gender-based violence, since that issue must be addressed systematically. Resettlement was an important tool for burden- and responsibility-sharing and her delegation hoped that the experiences of the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism, which was supported by Sweden, could provide useful input for the development of the three-year strategy for resettlement. Sweden was a long-standing supporter of the Inspector General's Office and risk management efforts. The measures taken to address sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse were highly appreciated. On the subject of statelessness, Sweden had joined the core group of countries working on the I Belong campaign. Lastly, Sweden was a strong supporter of the Grand Bargain and was pleased to note that UNHCR was as well, since her country continued to be one of the largest bilateral donors to UNHCR and was concerned by funding gaps.

49. **Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation was astonished by the information presented regarding Venezuela. Human rights were being used as justification for regime change

backed by the Government of the United States. The High Commissioner seemed surprisingly unaware that the living conditions of the Venezuelan people were deteriorating as a result of unilateral coercive measures. Sources were not indicated for the figures quoted and the numbers were questionable, since they had been provided by Governments clearly opposed to the constitutional Government of Venezuela. The figures for people leaving Venezuela on a daily basis were intended to justify humanitarian intervention of the kind seen in Iraq, Syria or Libya. In Uganda, statistics had been manipulated by UNHCR and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the same thing was evidently happening in Venezuela. His country rejected the exploitation of human rights by United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, which only served to delegitimize their work.

50. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he hoped the omnibus resolution would be finalized as quickly as possible in order to move towards adoption of the global compact on refugees and its implementation. The compact was not only an emergency response tool; it would also help find sustainable solutions. The stronger the support of the General Assembly for the compact in the weeks ahead, the more effective its implementation would be, as it would draw from a consensus.

51. The compact would be crucial for all, since responsibility could not be left to a few donors and host countries. Countries hosting many refugees, such as Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mexico and Turkey, held very important stakes in the process. He was very grateful to countries that had pledged financial support, especially the United States, which remained the largest donor and had in fact increased its support, and the European Union and Germany. Funding would continue to be vital, given the multiple, protracted crises around the world. Many delegations had focused on an alternative approach that was growing around the compact and the comprehensive refugee response framework, which involved the mobilization of additional development resources through institutions such as the World Bank and bilateral development agencies. The idea was to intensify the mobilization of development resources – targeted at refugee situations and host communities but not channelled through UNHCR – in particular in priority areas such as education, employment and the environment.

52. The comprehensive refugee response framework had now been applied in 15 countries and through two regional approaches: Somali refugees and northern Central America. It had been shown that mobilization was possible: a total of \$6.5 billion, multi-year, had been

mobilized, which was more than UNHCR usually mobilized in a single year. A much broader coalition of responders had been mobilized in those countries than in the past. In places where that had been particularly successful, such as in Ethiopia, UNHCR had also been able to mobilize private sector foundations. The application of the comprehensive refugee response framework, which preceded the adoption of the compact, had shown how important and positive the compact would be. The 15 countries that had embraced the framework had shown the way, and he hoped that their implementation would be an example to other countries. He fully agreed with the representative of Ethiopia that the same solutions could be expanded to repatriation situations. Efforts were already under way to do so in Afghanistan, which was a country of origin for refugees but had requested to embrace the framework, in a situation in which the challenge was to make returns sustainable. It was an interesting possibility that had a lot of potential.

53. Simplifying the process of recognizing educational qualifications in host countries was a key issue for Qatar, which was a significant donor to education programmes. Education was one of the centrepieces of the comprehensive refugee response framework and UNHCR was working on that in various situations with some success.

54. UNHCR greatly valued the memorandum of understanding it had signed in Myanmar in conjunction with UNDP. They had started two rounds of assessment in two areas of origin of refugees and were embarking on a third. The process should be accelerated, and greater access was needed to conduct assessments. In parallel, the fundamental obstacles to return must also be tackled, such as the lack of freedom of movement and access to the job market and services for the Rohingya community. If those obstacles were not addressed, and they could only be addressed by the Government of Myanmar, conducive conditions would not be in place and people would not decide to return voluntarily, whatever UNHCR said on the matter. UNHCR was grateful to Bangladesh for its offer to help verify voluntariness and a memorandum of understanding had been signed with Bangladesh in that regard. It would be important to find a solution for those who remained in Myanmar in displacement camps; it would send a positive signal to others if they were able to return home with freedom of movement and access to services.

55. In terms of restructuring and reform, decisions had been taken regarding broad parameters such as the relocation of regional bureaux closer to the point of delivery. The design of the restructure was being prepared and would hopefully be ready in January, for

implementation during 2019 and 2020. At that point, it would be possible to provide more details. As far as possible, the relocation of regional bureaux would be consistent with the current regional presence of other United Nations organizations and with the strengthening of country offices being promoted through the reform of the United Nations and the resident coordinator system. However, that was only one aspect of the reform; others were equally important. The new Division of Resilience and Solutions was being created to invest further in the relationship with development organizations and bilateral development agencies and in the search for more sustainable solutions. It would bring together activities previously carried out by various divisions.

56. The registration of refugees was a key function supported by UNHCR in host countries. Registration must be performed with the agreement of the host country, which was responsible for identifying and counting refugees. However, UNHCR provided advice and recommended registration wherever possible. It also recommended the use of advanced digital technology to carry it out, which had already been tested in Jordan and Uganda.

57. Mexico was a country in which the fundamental principles of the compact were already being applied. UNHCR was working with the Government of Mexico to strengthen its capacity to handle increased flows of people arriving from northern Central America. MIRPS, which was one of the practical applications of the compact, also concerned neighbouring countries, both countries of origin and destination. Applications for asylum in Mexico had risen and UNHCR appreciated its cooperation with Mexico on that critical issue.

58. Regarding the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNHCR engagement with people leaving the country, in collaboration with IOM, was undertaken from a purely humanitarian perspective. UNHCR did not have a political approach and he categorically rejected any accusation of politicization. He had seen for himself that people were arriving with humanitarian needs. He was glad of the UNHCR presence in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where it was engaging with the Government regarding its own refugee population, which it had generously hosted for decades. UNHCR would likewise continue to work with those countries that were now hosting Venezuelans in a humanitarian spirit.

59. Regarding the way forward, at the end of the first year following adoption of the compact, the first global refugee forum would be held with all stakeholders to take stock of its implementation. He would like the forum to be a collective way of ensuring that the

compact delivered concrete results and made a real difference in the lives of refugees and those able to return to their countries as part of sustainable solutions.

60. *Mr. Molina Linares (Guatemala), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

61. **Mr. Fernández-Zincke** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and in addition, Georgia, said that forced displacement was a global phenomenon that could only be addressed effectively by the international community as a whole, yet, developing countries continued to host the vast majority of refugees and bear the brunt of forced displacement. The European Union therefore strongly supported the High Commissioner's call for more equitable responsibility- and burden-sharing. The global compact on refugees was an important manifestation of the political will and ambition of the international community to strengthen solidarity with refugees and host communities.

62. The comprehensive refugee response framework had become a catalyst for change that had brought positive results. The European Union was heartened by the measures taken to promote better socioeconomic inclusion of refugees, which would lead to better outcomes for both refugees and their host communities and better prepare refugees for possible return and reintegration.

63. He commended the 15 countries already applying the comprehensive refugee response framework for their leadership and generosity. The European Union was playing its part; it was already applying that approach in its external action and had launched multi-year development actions amounting to close to €250 million in comprehensive refugee response framework countries. Furthermore, it had provided more than €700 million in non-humanitarian assistance in 2017 to the major host countries, in addition to European Union humanitarian assistance and the significant financial support and engagement of its member States. The European Union also remained a strong supporter of regional approaches to strengthen cooperation. Its Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and Facility for Refugees in Turkey had mobilized €7.5 billion, with substantial contributions from European Union member States.

64. The European Union encouraged UNHCR to continue building partnerships with development actors, the private sector and civil society, and to strengthen its engagement with host communities and refugees

themselves. In that regard, it welcomed the growing partnerships with the World Bank, the International Labour Organization and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

65. Nevertheless, as the international community moved forward with a stronger and more predictable response to displacement, more must be done to prevent it and address its root causes. Displacement could not be solved by the humanitarian community alone and the European Union remained committed to bringing together political, humanitarian and development instruments. Internally displaced persons represented the majority of those forcibly displaced and were often more vulnerable. The European Union encouraged UNHCR to take forward the recommendations from the operational review of its engagement in situations of internal displacement.

66. The fact that funding to UNHCR had remained stable was a clear recognition of the organization's competence, knowledge and skills and a demonstration of trust in the High Commissioner and his staff. Yet the gap between needs and resources remained unacceptably high. Donor countries must consider increased, predictable and more flexible support. UNHCR must continue to broaden the donor base, expand funding resources, including from the private sector, and increase its efficiency and effectiveness, in line with the Grand Bargain commitments.

67. He reiterated the European Union's firm support of UNHCR and the cause of refugee protection and expressed deep appreciation for humanitarian relief workers, who regularly put their lives at risk to assist those in need.

68. **Mr. Cerutti** (Switzerland) said that his delegation wished to thank UNHCR staff for their unwavering commitment to displaced and stateless persons, especially since they themselves were often subject to violence or intimidation.

69. Regarding the global compact on refugees, Switzerland welcomed the reaffirmation of key elements of refugee protection, including the right to seek asylum, the principle of non-refoulement and respect for humanitarian principles. It also welcomed the references in the compact to other types of forced displacement. A collective approach was the only way to respond to current global challenges, and Switzerland called on all States to reaffirm the compact through the omnibus resolution and to commit to its implementation.

70. Switzerland itself was implementing various measures, as shown by its increased investment in

education, including in emergency situations, which also benefited refugees. In addition, the country continued to provide UNHCR with financial support, more than 40 per cent of which was unearmarked. It had also launched projects in specific countries and contexts where the comprehensive refugee response framework had been rolled out and supported the Durable Solutions Initiative in Somalia.

71. His delegation welcomed the emphasis on the centrality of protection. Safety and dignity were key objectives of all humanitarian action. UNHCR leadership in the area of protection in the United Nations humanitarian system remained crucial, including in relation to the international legal regime that protected refugees.

72. Switzerland supported UNHCR in its fight against fraud, corruption and, above all, the abuse of displaced persons and sexual harassment within the organization. His delegation noted the reforms aimed at bringing skills closer to the field and encouraged UNHCR to strengthen its regional offices effectively without weakening its global capacity. The technical integrity of UNHCR programmes in areas such as water, sanitation and shelter was an essential part of its protection mandate.

73. There were twice as many displaced persons as refugees and Switzerland welcomed the reference to the recently launched action plan to advance prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced persons (GP20), and the leading role played by UNHCR in that regard. His delegation hoped that it would help refocus attention on the needs of internally displaced persons and galvanize action at the global, regional and national levels.

74. **Mr. Mutua** (Kenya) said his delegation noted with concern that low- and middle-income countries hosted 85 per cent of refugees globally and that 63 per cent of the refugees under the responsibility of UNHCR lived in 10 countries, which were shouldering the burden of the global refugee crisis despite numerous social and economic challenges.

75. Kenya welcomed the comprehensive refugee response framework as laid out in the New York Declaration, in particular because it was designed to strengthen protection and assistance for refugees while emphasizing equitable, predictable and sustained support for refugees, host countries and communities in countries of origin. Likewise, he noted with gratitude that for the first time, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2018–2022 fully integrated refugees and stateless persons as target populations.

76. Kenya had been applying the comprehensive refugee response framework at the regional level through the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and the Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, supported by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Since independence, Kenya had hosted large numbers of refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries. Currently, Kenya was home to 431,901 refugees, a number in decline as a result of the Tripartite Agreement, signed by the Governments of Kenya and Somalia and UNHCR in 2013, which had facilitated the safe and voluntary return of nearly 100,000 Somali refugees in the intervening years.

77. His Government was committed to enhancing the self-reliance and inclusion of refugees in Kenya, in particular the development of the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement to benefit refugees and residents of Turkana County. It facilitated legal status for refugees with legitimate claims to citizenship and/or residency in Kenya through marriage or parentage and implemented the Guidelines on Admission of Non-Citizens to Institutions of Basic Education and Training in Kenya, which were designed to facilitate enrolment of refugees and other non-citizens in Kenyan schools.

78. Kenya still faced challenges associated with hosting large numbers of refugees, including environmental degradation and overexploitation of scarce resources. Those challenges could prospectively degenerate into conflict between host communities and refugees, with refugee camps becoming fertile ground for radicalization and recruitment by terrorist groups. As the global refugee population under the mandate of UNHCR continued to rise, it was imperative for Member States to honour international obligations and collectively support refugees, host countries, countries of origin and other relevant stakeholders in the protection, assistance, integration and eventual repatriation and reintegration of refugees in their home countries.

79. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan) said the world was witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record, with the number of people displaced by armed conflict having surpassed 25.4 million, half of whom were under the age of 18.

80. Wars, human rights abuses and protracted refugee situations had become endemic. The global refugee crisis had morphed into a catastrophe, with hundreds of thousands fleeing war and persecution in Syria, Myanmar, Palestine, Afghanistan and South Sudan. The unprecedented humanitarian challenges posed by those large-scale displacements warranted greater

commitment from the international community to addressing the plight of people on the move.

81. While low- and middle-income countries continued to host the majority of refugees globally, many countries in the developed world seemed to be moving in the opposite direction, increasing the rate of rejection of asylum applications and speeding up deportations.

82. Her country had demonstrated unparalleled generosity by hosting millions of Afghan refugees for almost four decades, opening both homes and hearts to what had become the largest protracted refugee presence anywhere in the world since the Second World War. Pakistan considered it a humanitarian as well as religious duty to provide refuge to those in need and continued to provide access to education, health care and livelihood opportunities to its Afghan brothers and sisters. Economic challenges notwithstanding, the Government and people of Pakistan continued to express solidarity and provide hospitality, thereby upholding the principles of international refugee protection. With the solutions strategy for Afghan refugees, Pakistan would continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR for voluntary repatriation with safety and honour, and for sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan.

83. Pakistan was concerned about efforts by some in the international community to seek out “innovative financial instruments”. Refugee-hosting countries, 85 per cent of which were developing countries, should not be burdened with additional debt. Retaining the distinction between development and humanitarian assistance remained critical.

84. The crisis emanating from fresh refugee arrivals called for urgent action, but the international community must not forget the need to deliver on its commitment to addressing protracted refugee situations. A sustainable solution to the refugee crisis necessitated a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of displacement and must include the resolution of conflicts and the settling of long-term political questions.

85. **Mr. Schettino** (Italy) said that the number of forcibly displaced persons and refugees in the world was increasing at an alarming pace. Their numbers represented an unprecedented challenge that required a holistic and multilevel approach, as well as a coordinated humanitarian response based on the principles of partnership, solidarity and shared responsibility.

86. Owing to its geographical position, Italy was well acquainted with the challenges posed by massive mixed migration flows. Over the past years, his country had spared no effort to rescue people at sea, save the lives of migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean, combat traffickers, ensure the protection of people on the move, address the root causes of migration and offer economic alternatives to discourage the business model that benefited from irregular migration and smuggling. The humanitarian corridors, which had been established in that context, were a unique and innovative initiative that had delivered people from armed conflict and life-threatening situations to Italy in a safe, orderly and regular manner. Over 1,500 refugees had been welcomed to Rome, most of whom were in situations of vulnerability, including unaccompanied children and women.

87. The international response to the issue of people on the move must urgently be reformulated on the basis of the principle of sharing responsibility more equitably, which had been enshrined in the New York Declaration. It was now the duty of the international community to fulfil those commitments. He welcomed the positive results of the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework in 15 countries, believing it to be the right path forward.

88. The global compact on refugees was a sound, holistic, multisectoral and concrete plan of action. The framework for international cooperation established therein was founded upon shared principles, commitments and understandings of the issue of refugees, including in its humanitarian, development and human rights dimensions, and would maximize development cooperation alongside and as a complement to humanitarian assistance. It would offer durable solutions for both refugees and host communities, providing the latter with timely, predictable and sustainable support.

89. His delegation therefore fully subscribed to the content and objectives of the global compact on refugees and looked forward to its adoption, jointly with the UNHCR omnibus resolution, in New York in December 2018. Italy would provide active support and cooperation to that end.

90. **Mr. Almustafa** (Iraq) said that his country reaffirmed its commitment to international instruments on the voluntary return of refugees to their homes and had taken steps to facilitate the voluntary return of Iraqi refugees. Iraqi authorities had made special efforts to protect and assist refugees, and, with the help of civil society organizations and United Nations agencies, to ensure that refugees obtained basic services. In their just

war against the terrorist gangs of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Iraqi security forces had opened safe corridors for civilians and had been able to return many displaced families to their towns. Iraq called on the international community to stand firm in its war against terrorism and document terrorist violations against refugees and displaced persons.

91. Despite the challenges presented by terrorism and current economic conditions, Iraq had continued to welcome Syrian refugees and provide them with housing and education on an equal footing with Iraqi citizens. According to the most recent figures, some 248,000 displaced Syrians were living in various Iraqi governorates. Iraq welcomed the efforts made by United Nations agencies and Member States to implement the comprehensive refugee response framework contained in the New York Declaration.

92. **Mr. Sitnikov** (Russian Federation) said that the return of millions of Syrians was a burning issue that should be immune from politicization. He called on the High Commissioner, international organizations and the Member States of the United Nations to actively sign up to the initiative of Syria and Russia regarding the return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons.

93. The Russian Federation considered that the global compact on refugees would help protect the rights and enhance the status of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons worldwide, while ensuring that the High Commissioner fulfilled his mandate more efficiently. His delegation welcomed, in particular, the inclusion of provisions on the need to search for political resolutions to conflicts and to improve the socioeconomic development of countries of origin in order to stem flows of forced displacement and encourage refugees to voluntarily return home and reintegrate into society. The concept of shared responsibility, however, represented an attempt to shift responsibility onto others. The complicated migration situation in Europe was a consequence of certain Western countries' irresponsible and illegal interference in the internal affairs of sovereign Middle Eastern and North African States with aims to destabilize them and topple Governments that were not to their liking. The States involved in that interference should bear the primary responsibility for assisting the victims of it, especially refugees and internally displaced persons.

94. The decision to accept refugees should be taken by host States in accordance with their domestic legislation and international obligations. Refugees whose life or freedom was not in danger could be accepted exclusively by the free consent of the receiving State and in full compliance with the principle of State

sovereignty. The principle of non-refoulement did not apply to the case of their return to the safe States from which they came nor was it determined by their personal preferences; it was based on objective factors in the State in which they were nationals. Even if the criteria of those objective circumstances were met, States had the right to expel refugees for legitimate reasons if they posed a threat to the country or if they had been convicted of the commission of a particularly grievous crime. It was beyond doubt that refugee rights did not extend to those who had committed a crime against peace, a war crime or a crime against humanity or had been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. States' obligations to guarantee refugees' labour rights, provide social security and governmental assistance applied only to refugees lawfully staying in their territory.

95. He drew attention to the fact that climate, environmental degradation and natural disasters were not recognized under international law as reasons for migration. To date, no reliable and universally accepted scientific data indicated a direct relationship between climate change and displacement of people or even the primacy of environmental factors as a driver for displacement.

96. Lastly, he emphasized that the global compact on refugees would not be a legally binding instrument. The Russian Federation would not consider itself bound by any legal, financial or other obligations under it, particularly those that were inconsistent with its national interests, legislation and international obligations.

97. **Mr. Alfassam** (Kuwait) said that his delegation agreed with the emphasis on treating the root causes of forced displacement and on finding innovative ways to promote voluntary and dignified return. For decades, Kuwait had been concerned about instability in Yemen, and had extended humanitarian and development support; in 2018, it had provided \$250 million in humanitarian assistance for the Yemeni people, distributed via United Nations entities. The repercussions of the coup in Yemen and the failure to find political solutions had contributed to an unprecedented deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

98. The international community had failed to find a solution to the Syrian crisis, which was entering its eighth year. The conflict had displaced over 12 million persons. Kuwait had responded to the humanitarian crisis from the start, hosting three international donor conferences and presiding over two subsequent conferences. Total financial assistance extended by Kuwait since the beginning of the crisis had reached

\$1.6 billion. The country had also worked in the Security Council to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people by sponsoring Security Council resolution [2401 \(2018\)](#), which called for humanitarian access and an end to hostilities.

99. In April, Kuwait had headed a delegation to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and Rakhine State in Myanmar to ascertain the scope of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. During its visit, the delegation saw destroyed cities and villages and heard reports of heinous crimes. Kuwait was very concerned about the more than 730,000 displaced persons in Bangladesh and believed that the crisis was the worst humanitarian disaster in modern times.

100. **Mr. Dang Son Truong** (Viet Nam) said that the current refugee crisis was a global challenge, given its humanitarian, economic and security implications. By the end of 2017, tens of millions of people around the world had been forced from their homes, and some had been driven to use the services of smugglers to flee persecution or seek protection, which exposed them to such risks as abuse and exploitation, human rights violations, harm and even death.

101. Viet Nam was committed to international cooperation in the response to refugee issues and had contributed to consultations on the global compact on refugees. Transparency was needed in granting refugee status and in making a clear distinction between migrants fleeing their countries for economic reasons and refugees. A mechanism must be established to share the burden, including financing and resource contribution, while avoiding any overlap with current international mechanisms or processes that were operating effectively.

102. He hoped that once the global compact on refugees was adopted, it would contribute to protecting refugees and resolving underlying problems on the basis of international cooperation and solidarity. As a responsible Member State, Viet Nam had joined the New York Declaration and would carry out the necessary procedures to adopt the compact.

103. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that massive displacement, mostly in developing countries, continued to destabilize regional security and socioeconomic development. Addressing the issue of refugees required dealing adequately with underlying causes such as conflicts, climate change and global imbalances. Improved coordination and synergy between UNHCR and development agencies could help to develop a long-term solution while still addressing the emergency needs of refugees.

104. Countries of origin, transit and destination must bear their responsibilities based on their international obligations and capacities, and the humanitarian nature of refugee protection mechanisms and instruments should be safeguarded to avoid politicization. Given that limited resources were available for addressing the growing and complex problem of human displacement, UNHCR should focus on its core mandate of providing protection and assistance to refugees, rather than to persons of concern or migrants.

105. He noted with serious concern the emergencies in some countries of transit where refugees and migrants were subjected to violence and abuse. In that regard, Eritrea had been requesting the cooperation of UNHCR in the evacuation of Eritreans from Libya who registered for voluntary repatriation with the Eritrean Embassy there. He urged UNHCR to extend full cooperation and afford equal attention to all nationals stranded in conflict-affected areas in Libya.

106. Eritrea maintained a policy of voluntary repatriation of its nationals and opposed forced repatriation or expulsion. Despite the fact that Eritreans who chose to return to their home country were welcome, and much to the dismay of his Government, UNHCR and other organizations continued to claim that Eritrean returnees were subjected to persecution. That claim had been challenged by several European countries that had reviewed their policies after having sent fact-finding missions to Eritrea.

107. UNHCR must engage with countries of concern before issuing eligibility guidelines. It should seek policy clarification from those countries rather than second-guessing them or seeking information and interpretation from third parties. Under the eligibility criteria of UNHCR, Eritrean economic migrants were classified bona fide refugees, which continued to contribute significantly as a pull factor with great impact. In the resulting displacements, migrants en route to Europe had suffered unspeakably at the hands of traffickers and smugglers. He therefore reiterated the request that UNHCR review and rectify its country guidelines on Eritrea.

108. The global compact on refugees might indeed be a symbol of further commitment to resolving the refugee issue. However, political will and joint effort would be required to identify long-term and sustainable solutions to wars, protracted conflicts, human rights violations and regime-change military adventurism.

109. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that his country considered the global compact on refugees to be an important set of guidelines for dealing with the refugee issue. Improved cooperation among political,

humanitarian, development and peace actors was essential to pursuing prevention efforts and addressing its root causes. Concerned States should bear their share of responsibility, but UNHCR could play a supportive and catalytic role through a multi-stakeholder partnership approach, in line with legal frameworks and in close coordination with national institutions. It was also important to support countries to which internally displaced persons were planning to return.

110. In his report, the High Commissioner for Refugees referred to a 2017 exodus from Myanmar to Bangladesh that had morphed into a refugee crisis. That exodus resulted from the violence triggered by the terrorist attacks that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army had perpetrated against security forces and innocent civilians in Rakhine State in August 2017. Myanmar was deeply concerned about those displaced persons, in particular women and children.

111. Since signing three bilateral agreements with Bangladesh, Myanmar had been taking steps to prepare for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons. To that end, Myanmar had signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding with UNHCR and UNDP in June 2018 aimed at securing assistance for government efforts towards the speedy and efficient resettlement and rehabilitation of the returnees to Rakhine State. Having been granted the necessary access, UNHCR and UNDP had carried out initial assessments in 23 villages and three village tracts in August 2018 and a second phase of assessments in 26 villages in October 2018. Those assessments had helped to identify community initiatives that could support government efforts to improve the lives of all affected populations and to build trust and promote social cohesion among all communities.

112. Decisions had been taken on the timeline and procedures for repatriation at the earliest possible date at the third meeting of the joint working group between Myanmar and Bangladesh. The first round of repatriations would be carried out by sea and the second by land. The joint working group had also met with displaced persons to encourage and inform them of the preparations for their return to Rakhine State, in line with the shared principles of informed consent and voluntary return.

113. Myanmar was determined to provide conditions in which all communities could live in harmony and peace in the northern Rakhine State. Continued cooperation with UNHCR and UNDP would make the repatriation process successful. Any initiative taken with regard to Rakhine State should be considered from multidimensional perspectives and must include

consideration for the interests of all people living in Rakhine State, especially ethnic nationals such as Rakhine, Thet, Mro, Maramargyi, Dianet and Kaman. United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations should take every precaution to ensure they did no harm to any indigenous communities in the process.

114. Friends did not blow complex issues out of proportion. Rather, they engaged in constructive cooperation to find solutions, just as had been done during the informal trilateral meetings held by Myanmar, China and Bangladesh. Such cooperation, including with the United Nations and its agencies, was a crucial part of the foreign policy of Myanmar. Likewise, constructive cooperation and support from United Nations agencies such as UNHCR and UNDP were equally important, given that development was one of the root causes of the problems in Rakhine State. Myanmar would work closely with UNDP to implement projects in the area that would contribute to peace and development.

115. Existing development efforts had yielded hundreds of new jobs and opportunities through public-private partnerships in Rakhine State in recent years. An assessment had been carried out to ascertain the viability of a new special economic zone that would bring additional jobs and businesses to the region. Infrastructure had also improved, with electrification expanded and new roads and bridges built, including a new highway that connected remote areas previously accessible only by boat.

116. Alongside the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, the work of the independent commission of inquiry would become an important guiding light for the solution of long-standing problems in Rakhine State. The Government at all levels would continue to pursue reconciliation, peace and development there. Myanmar was willing and able to address the issue using all possible measures in a comprehensive manner, and Member States and the international community were invited to join those efforts.

117. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the global compact on refugees was an important milestone for the international community in its efforts to implement the commitments made in the New York Declaration. The final text reflected a delicate balance between the legitimate calls for equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing and the limits imposed by its voluntary nature.

118. In engaging constructively in the drafting process, Brazil had demonstrated willingness to establish a

robust responsibility-sharing framework. His delegation had insisted that national needs and priorities be duly considered and that the provision of development cooperation be in addition to regular assistance levels and not subjected to conditionalities. Brazil had called attention to the role of third-country solutions and highlighted the importance of the inclusion of refugees in national systems, especially health and education services, as well as of the promotion of livelihoods. He was especially pleased with the sections of the global compact on refugees relating to children, adolescents and youth, statelessness, and food security and nutrition.

119. Some of the elements contained in the global compact were already a reality in his country, where national policies and practices were entirely aligned with the approaches espoused in the text. For example, following a whole-of-government approach, Brazil had established an interministerial committee to coordinate the response to movements of Venezuelan nationals. Brazil was now hosting more than 75,000 Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants. The reception centre at the border was multisectoral, encompassing services of registration, documentation, food assistance, health care and vaccination, and psychosocial support. All asylum seekers and migrants enjoyed free access to national health and education systems.

120. He underscored the importance of the review function assigned to the global refugee forums, which would allow for course corrections as needed and ensure the effectiveness of the global compact on refugees. Brazil would remain engaged in the process towards convening the first global refugee forum in 2019.

121. **Mr. Baizhanovcell** (Kazakhstan) said that Kazakhstan wholeheartedly supported UNHCR for its tireless efforts in responding to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers around the world. It supported the adoption of the global compact, which was a balanced and practical document. While it was not legally binding, it represented the political will and ambition of the international community as a whole for strengthened cooperation and solidarity with refugees and affected host countries.

122. One of the primary objectives of the global compact on refugees was to facilitate access to durable solutions. In that regard, voluntary repatriation, in conditions of safety and dignity, remained the preferred solution in the majority of refugee situations. As one of the Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan attached great importance to promoting the enabling conditions for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees. Kazakhstan continued to provide technical and humanitarian assistance in order to facilitate the sustainability and

safety of their return and help stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan was investing more than \$50 million in educating Afghan students, building schools, hospitals and road infrastructure and providing humanitarian assistance. A regional conference on the theme of empowering women in Afghanistan had been hosted in Astana on 5 September 2018. One of the practical outcomes of that conference had been the decision by the Government to allocate additional scholarships for Afghan women for the period 2019–2020.

123. Kazakhstan was also providing financial support to UNHCR through yearly voluntary contributions, increasing its contributions in 2018.

124. **Mr. Teffo** (South Africa) said that his delegation, like many others, was concerned about the dramatic increase in the number of displaced persons, the major causes of which included armed conflicts, persecution and violence. World leaders must continue to invest in addressing such underlying issues as poverty and underdevelopment, which were generally regarded as key drivers of displacement.

125. Despite the significant social and economic challenges faced by major host countries, their Governments and communities had continued to demonstrate solidarity and generosity, upholding the principles of international refugee protection. Notwithstanding, his delegation was concerned about the consequences of refugee outflows, which continued to disproportionately affect developing countries. The protracted nature of displacements, which could in some cases last for many years, was another issue requiring urgent attention.

126. On the issue of funding models, the development resources to be provided for the implementation of the global compact must be in addition to the regular development assistance provided to local communities. In that regard, he strongly recommended that progressive strategies be developed on the issue of the disbursement of funds and that they be coupled with quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the allocated funds were meticulously managed and directed to the intended recipients. South Africa trusted that initiatives by the World Bank would not add to the debt burden of host countries, in particular poor and middle-income countries.

127. The global compact on refugees was grounded in the international refugee protection regime through the proper application of the provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The principle of international cooperation in sharing the burden of

hosting large numbers of refugees was critical to addressing those challenges. In that regard, he reiterated his country's support for and commitment to the landmark New York Declaration and its mechanisms, including the comprehensive refugee response framework. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the implementation of and follow-up to the global compact on refugees, which was a non-negotiated outcome, maintained its legally non-binding and voluntary nature.

128. South Africa continued to open its ports of entry to refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees were allowed to stay in the country until they decided to return to their countries of origin when conditions were conducive. They had the right of access to such services as education, health care, jobs, legal aid and the courts. In addition, failed asylum seekers and illegal migrants were treated in a humane manner throughout the process of repatriation. Recognizing that voluntary return remained the best durable solution for refugees, he called upon development partners to invest in the voluntary return of refugees, in particular to their countries of origin.

129. **Ms. Agladze** (Georgia) said that with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, Member States had pledged to leave no one behind. Since then, however, soaring numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees represented the personal tragedy of millions around the world and highlighted the urgent need for a more comprehensive approach.

130. The Government of Georgia continued to implement national programmes and action plans aimed at improving the living conditions of internally displaced persons and refugees. In 2016, the parliament had adopted a law to protect the rights of all asylum seekers, refugees and individuals seeking international protection, in line with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. It aimed to strengthen procedural safeguards at all stages of the asylum process, including ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms of all asylum seekers and guaranteeing special treatment for persons with disabilities.

131. Moreover, in Georgia, those under international protection were guaranteed a safe stay and benefited from monthly allowances during their stay, and asylum seekers, refugees and those with humanitarian status benefited from universal health-care programmes and enjoyed the right to education and work.

132. Georgia reaffirmed its commitment to addressing internal displacement at the global level as well. Her

delegation welcomed the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018–2020, which had been launched within the framework of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and supported further initiatives to focus greater global attention on internally displaced persons.

133. The Government was implementing multiple assistance programmes to improve the living conditions of internally displaced persons from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Since the early 1990s, the Government had delivered a long-term solution to the housing problem of up to 40,000 families. In addition, internally displaced persons enjoyed the right to privatize the living spaces granted to them by the Government and to retain the property even after returning to their places of origin.

134. However, the fundamental right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their places of origin in a safe and dignified manner remained an outstanding issue. The firm stance of the international community towards the plight of the internally displaced persons and refugees in Georgia was cemented in a number of United Nations resolutions and declarations, including General Assembly resolution [72/280](#) which stressed the necessity to address the need to sustainably return all internally displaced persons and refugees from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Nevertheless, despite numerous calls by the international community, the Russian Federation, which exercised effective control over Georgian occupied territories, continued to disregard and ignore their fundamental right of return.

135. The issue of forced displacement in Georgia was also among the core agenda items of the consultations in Geneva, but despite constant appeals by the participants and Co-Chairs, the Russian Federation and its occupation regimes continued the practice of deliberately disrupting the process through blackmail and walkouts, totally neglecting and ignoring the rights of internally displaced persons and refugees in the process.

136. Against that backdrop, she called for increased attention from Member States and the High Commissioner for Refugees in order to ensure the right to safe and dignified return of all internally displaced persons and refugees, in Georgia and around the world, to their places of origin.

137. **Ms. Chifwaila** (Zambia) said that her country was a signatory to the key international legal document for the protection of the rights of refugees and had hosted refugees from its neighbouring countries since the 1960s. Since August 2017, Zambia had been receiving

refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, most of whom arrived through border points in the northern part of Zambia. If the refugee influx continued, it was estimated that Zambia might be hosting up to 76,000 refugees, including the existing caseload, by the end of 2018.

138. She issued an appeal to the international community to scale up interventions in order to help prevent that escalating refugee influx from degenerating into a humanitarian crisis. It was estimated that in order to adequately respond to the needs of the refugees and the local communities, Zambia would require over \$74 million in 2018 alone. The Government of Zambia, with support from UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, had taken steps to ensure that appropriate reception measures and conditions were put in place in refugee-hosting communities, providing access to territory, adequate reception centres and registration facilities, clean water and sanitation, core relief items and health services.

139. In addition, the Government had established an interministerial steering committee under the leadership of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The committee had been mandated to coordinate a comprehensive humanitarian emergency response in the country through a whole-of-society approach in order to alleviate the burden on refugees and host communities alike. It had also enacted the Refugees Act No. 1 of 2017, which represented a significant shift from an earlier 1970 law and broadened the scope of the rights of refugees, including steps towards a settlement approach. It had granted refugees the right to property and access to justice, including the facilitation of permanent residency or naturalization as an alternative to legal status.

140. As one of the countries selected for the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework, Zambia maintained its commitment to strengthening its settlement approach in hosting refugees, which was critical to strengthening self-reliance and promoting peaceful coexistence with the host communities.

141. Her delegation looked forward to the adoption of the global compact on refugees, which would significantly improve the international response to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations by strengthening the involvement of development actors and other partners. She stressed the need to address the conditions that exacerbated large movements of refugees and to ensure that the international response to refugees was grounded in the common principles of shared responsibility. Zambia would continue to provide protection to those who

needed it, in line with its national laws and the laws of the African Union, as well as the United Nations conventions to which Zambia was a party.

142. **Mr. Ajayi** (Nigeria) said that Nigeria had been affected by the global refugee crisis as a country of origin, transit and destination. In addition, Nigeria faced the issue of internally displaced persons due to many causative factors, including terrorist attacks and climate change, which had caused a scramble for water and pasture by pastoralists and herders.

143. However, the Government recognized that it was primarily responsible for responding to those displacements. Local authorities must take the lead in addressing the humanitarian, development and security challenges facing the country. Partners were there to support, not supplant, government efforts. The Government was taking a leadership role in tackling those challenges through several home-grown initiatives. Those initiatives included the Buhari Plan, which was based on the principles of reconstruction, rehabilitation, resettlement, reintegration and reconciliation. The Buhari Plan specifically sought to provide immediate relief to the people of the North-East; rehabilitate and resettle internally displaced persons; support the restoration of livelihoods; create jobs; secure communities and drive infrastructure development; facilitate peacebuilding; revamp agriculture, which was the life blood of the North-East region; and resuscitate health-care services.

144. All of the Government's efforts to address the situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Nigeria included a gender-sensitive focus and were carried out with the utmost regard for the dignity, respect and human rights of Nigerian citizens and other nationals within the country. His country continued to promote and protect human rights even as it combatted terrorism. In that connection, children in armed conflicts were seen as victims and not as persons in contravention of Nigerian law, despite the unfortunate fact that Boko Haram sometimes used them as suicide bombers or combatants against the Nigerian State. Nigeria continued to find creative ways to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.

145. In addition, the Government of Nigeria was constantly working to innovate and improve civilian-military relations so as not to compound the plight of the innocent victims of terrorism, but rather to ensure safety, dignity and respect for the human rights of internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees. To that end, a human rights desk had been established in the Ministry of Defence to report, monitor and address any alleged

human rights violations by the military, in synergy with the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.

146. Nigeria was concerned about preventing gender-based violence and all forms of discrimination against women and girls while addressing the plight of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, and had taken part in many initiatives, including the campaigns to end violence against women and girls and the HeForShe campaign. The Government had unveiled a road map for preventing gender-based violence in the Lake Chad region domestically in July 2018 and internationally in September 2018 during the international conference co-hosted with Germany and Norway in Berlin. The road map was a call to action to protect refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons from gender-based violence in emergencies and humanitarian situations.

147. The global situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons was dire. Nonetheless, armed with the provisions of the global compact on refugees and a political will as strong as that demonstrated by his Government, the international community had the capacity to turn the tide for the better.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.