



General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
1 November 2018

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 42nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 November 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Shikongo (Vice-Chair)..... (Namibia)

Contents

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

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/>).

18-18347 (E)



Please recycle



In the absence of Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Chair, Ms. Shikongo (Namibia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

1. **Ms. Faizzad** (Afghanistan) said that, of the world's more than 25 million refugees, 6 million were Afghans. Most were under 18 and could play a constructive role in developing their country. Her Government worked with domestic entities and international partners to promote the well-being of Afghan refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. It was implementing a national action plan for returnees and internally displaced persons, and it had stepped up efforts to provide livelihood opportunities for returnees. By massively increasing the refugee repatriation budget, it had been able to launch programmes to provide returnees with shelter, clean water, electricity, paved streets and access to land and schools. Internationally, Afghanistan was committed to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, and it had recently established a refugee affairs council to improve coordination with international institutions and facilitate voluntary return. It had also recently announced its decision to apply the comprehensive refugee response framework.

2. Nevertheless, Afghans remained the second largest refugee population in the world. To address the root problem, her Government was endeavouring to lay the foundations for lasting peace. It had negotiated a first ceasefire with the Taliban, and it would continue to lead the peace process.

3. **Ms. Ershadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that proximity should not define responsibility for refugees. The massive arrival of refugees in Europe gave Europeans an inkling of the heavy burden that countries such as hers had carried for decades. Countries whose policies created large numbers of refugees were increasingly closing their borders to them.

4. The number of refugees resettled in third countries from Iran in the past two decades had been only a very small fraction of the annual refugee birth rate. Her Government once again called on the international community to take the measures necessary for their sustainable repatriation. For some 40 years, Iran had hosted more refugees than almost any other country. In the absence of meaningful international support, the services it provided were becoming increasingly

unsustainable, especially in light of the unlawful sanctions imposed by the United States following its unjustified withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement.

5. The global compact on refugees should establish concrete support mechanisms for host countries and communities while respecting their national sovereignty and should provide a path towards sustainable resolution of refugee crises. It should not create new burdens for countries hosting large numbers of refugees. Despite the need for a robust burden- and responsibility-sharing mechanism, the final text did not contain any formula, measurable commitment or specific target. Her delegation continued to insist on complementary mechanisms for ensuring predictable, equitable, efficient and effective burden- and responsibility-sharing.

6. While her Government would prefer an international conference on refugees to a global refugee forum, which seemed less action-oriented, it welcomed the proposal to hold high-level midterm reviews between forums. In addition, a voluntary periodic reporting mechanism should be established so that States could report their costs and contributions for hosting refugees. Iran also underlined the importance of specific and measurable targets for each of the four general objectives of the compact.

7. **Mr. Al Khalil** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that said that the Syrian refugee crisis was yet another instance of Governments and regimes exploiting the suffering of the Syrian people to further their narrow political interests. Turkey, for example, continued to exploit the Syrian refugee issue in order to put pressure on the member States of the European Union and expedite its European Union accession process. Meanwhile, Syrians in refugee camps outside their homeland continued to suffer gross violations of their human rights. Thousands of Syrians in those camps had fallen victim to human trafficking or sexual violence and the prevalence of child and early marriage among Syrians there remained shockingly high.

8. The Syrian Government was working with its humanitarian partners and friendly States to facilitate the voluntary, secure and orderly return of all Syrians to their homes. Regrettably, however, certain Western countries were striving to impede those efforts so that they could continue to exploit the suffering of Syrian refugees driven from their homes by wars and acts of terrorism. The Syrian Government urged all Member States and relevant international organizations to support its efforts to ensure the safe return of all Syrian refugees, especially as it had successfully liberated most

areas of the country that had previously been occupied by armed terrorist groups. The Government also called for renewed efforts to combat the terrorist groups still operating in Syria and for an end to all hostile actions that prevented Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons from rebuilding their lives. Furthermore, the unilateral measures taken by certain Governments against the Syrian people, which had paralyzed the economy, destroyed infrastructure and exacerbated unemployment must be ended.

9. Syria welcomed all sincere efforts to alleviate the suffering of Syrian refugees and migrants and rejected the politicization of human rights issues by certain States, which ran counter to humanitarian principles and violated international law. It also called on Member States to take decisive measures to eradicate all forms of discrimination and racism against Syrian refugees in the countries where they had sought refuge from the crisis in their homeland.

10. **Mr. Gutiérrez Segú Berdullas** (Spain) said that the refugee population had grown by 50 per cent in 10 years, and it was still growing. In 2018, Spain had worked closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A supporter of the comprehensive refugee response framework, it had contributed €1 million to the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework for Central America and Mexico (MIRPS). It was also a partner in the Shire Alliance, which ensured energy access for refugees in the Adi-Harush refugee camp in Tigray, Ethiopia, and in September 2018, it had acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Spain welcomed the integration of the global compact on refugees with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the compact's emphasis on equitable burden-sharing and increased cooperation. It was essential to take a multidimensional, multi-stakeholder approach to large-scale refugee movements.

11. **Mr. Moussa** (Egypt), noting that low- and middle-income developing countries bore the largest burden and responsibility for hosting refugees, said that more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing was urgently needed. The global compact on refugees was the first international agreement to address burden- and responsibility-sharing and the root causes of displacement in detail. By establishing a framework for international cooperation, it would enable timely, predictable and sustainable support for host countries and communities. It would also maximize development cooperation as a complement to humanitarian assistance.

12. Egypt was concerned at the shrinking asylum space in some developed countries and urged all States to respect the fundamental tenets of the international refugee regime and to share in the burdens and responsibilities of protecting and supporting refugees pending their voluntary return or resettlement. It remained committed to sheltering refugees in accordance with its longstanding tradition as a major refugee-hosting country.

13. **Ms. Picco** (Monaco) said that, in 2017, 16.2 million people had been forcibly displaced, the highest number ever recorded. More than half were children under 18 years, many travelling without their parents. Monaco had ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in 1956, and it had made voluntary contributions to UNHCR every year since 1961. It had signed a framework cooperation agreement with UNHCR in 2010, and in 2014, it had joined the Nansen Initiative, which worked to build intergovernmental consensus on a protection agenda for environmentally displaced people and to promote risk management in their countries of origin. In the context of the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, her country had signed two partnership agreements with UNHCR pledging a total contribution of €670,000 over three years, and it had been the fifth largest UNHCR donor per capita that year. It was currently hosting a number of refugee families for whom it provided free housing and health care. The parents received French language instruction, and the children attended Monegasque schools.

14. In the area of prevention, Monaco provided capacity-building for civil protection forces. It had also responded to 35 emergency situations, providing direct short-term food, health care, education and employment aid. In closing, she reiterated her country's support for the global compact on refugees, which would enable timely, predictable and sustainable assistance to host countries and communities.

15. **Mr. Dollo** (Mali) said that since the crisis in his country in 2012, central and northern Mali had been subject to terrorist and organized criminal attacks as well as extremist-stoked intercommunal violence. Mounting insecurity made farming difficult if not impossible, aggravating food insecurity and malnutrition in extremely poor areas already racked by the effects of climate change. In that context, his Government was working diligently to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. To lay the foundations for restoring government authority and basic social services the centre of the country, it had launched a security plan to halt the proliferation of small

arms and disarm militias, and it had opened a regional office for transitional justice.

16. To address the humanitarian emergency, Mali was implementing strategic measures to improve living conditions and reduce vulnerability. Thanks to the assistance of the Organization for International Migration (OIM), UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), his Government had been able to implement emergency response plans in Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Mopti through which material and financial support was being distributed to internally displaced persons and refugees. However, greater assistance was needed to improve the humanitarian response and to establish risk and disaster prevention and management mechanisms.

17. His Government was grateful for that assistance and also for the remarkable humanitarian work of non-governmental organizations. However, the funding gap for the humanitarian response plan for Mali was a matter of concern, and it joined with the Secretary-General and OCHA in appealing for additional financial resources.

18. **Mr. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that the Sudan's heritage and religious values compelled it to accept, host and protect the more than 2 million refugees who had entered the country. The Sudan remained committed to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, as well as all regional and international human rights instruments to which it was a party. Furthermore, the Sudanese Government had recently updated its national legislation on refugee issues to bring it into line with relevant regional and international instruments. The Sudan also supported the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the two related compacts that were being developed.

19. The mass migration of refugees from neighbouring countries had caused significant difficulties for the Sudan. The situation was further complicated because, in addition to the mass movement of persons, the Sudan also had to contend with mixed migration, illegal migration, refugees fleeing from camps and heading to cities, and human smuggling and trafficking. The Sudan fully supported the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, had enacted a new law on trafficking in persons and, in cooperation with the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, had hosted a regional conference in July 2018 on combating human trafficking, which had focused, in particular, on the trafficking and smuggling of migrants within and from the Horn of Africa. The Sudanese Government received very little assistance to help it combat the activities of

human traffickers, even though the international community increasingly acknowledged the key role played by the Sudan in that regard.

20. In collaboration with UNHCR and neighbouring States, the Sudan was facilitating the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons, both within the country and abroad. In 2017, the Sudan, Chad and UNHCR had signed a tripartite agreement that was facilitating the repatriation of thousands of Chadian and Sudanese refugees. Furthermore, the security and humanitarian situation in the Sudanese region of Darfur had improved markedly in recent years and thousands of displaced Darfuris were also returning to their homes. The Sudan would continue to support the voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees to Darfur as well as peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts in that region.

21. **Ms. Suzuki** (Japan) said that, with the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the increasing numbers of refugees, UNHCR faced ever greater responsibilities and expectations. It was time to put the global compact on refugees into practice by adopting the draft resolution on UNHCR by consensus.

22. In regard to the Syrian refugees, Japan welcomed the respect demonstrated by UNHCR for the principle of safe, voluntary and dignified return, and it would continue to provide assistance to the neighbouring refugee-hosting countries. Regarding the Rohingya refugees, it commended Bangladesh for its generosity as a host country and its efforts to negotiate a solution. It welcomed the signing of the memorandum of understanding among UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Myanmar, and it would continue to support efforts to create the conditions necessary for the refugees to return. With respect to sub-Saharan Africa, Japan welcomed the continued progress in implementing comprehensive refugee response frameworks and appealed to the international community to increase support for development in Africa.

23. Noting that UNHCR staff on the humanitarian frontlines faced increasing security risks, she said that Japan would continue to support the Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness, which provided valuable training for humanitarian workers and non-governmental organizations. It was imperative for the international community to join forces on humanitarian, peace and development initiatives, and Japan would continue to work with UNHCR and Member States to find durable solutions to the refugee crisis and build lasting peace.

24. **Ms. Goebel** (Germany) said that more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing was indispensable in providing sustainable solutions for the world's refugees and their hosts. She urged the delegations to bring the global compact on refugees to life by adopting the draft resolution on UNHCR and to join with Germany in ensuring its implementation.

25. **Ms. Lemus** (Mexico) said that international cooperation, burden- and responsibility-sharing and multi-stakeholder participation were required to provide adequate protection for the growing numbers of refugees. Mexico supported the global compact on refugees and was already implementing the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework for Central America and Mexico (MIRPS). It was working closely with UNHCR to make its asylum system more humane and efficient, and it valued the assistance provided by UNHCR for identifying and preregistering asylum seekers and educating them about the right to asylum, as well as for identifying those who were vulnerable or had special needs. UNHCR was also helping Mexico facilitate refugee access to its labour market and its education and health care services.

26. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that her country complied fully with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol and was committed to building a national asylum system consistent with European and international standards. Persons granted refugee or protection status in Ukraine had the same rights, freedoms and obligations as Ukrainian citizens and received a wide range of employment services. The relevant government agencies were working with international partners to strengthen the Ukrainian refugee protection system.

27. Around 1.5 million people in Ukraine had been forcibly displaced by the ongoing conflict. Furthermore, the Russian authorities were blocking Ukrainian and international humanitarian access to the occupied parts of Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea. Her Government continued to make every effort to strengthen security and social guarantees for internally displaced persons and protect their rights. In November 2017, it had adopted a strategy for their long-term socioeconomic integration that aimed to increase their independence and self-reliance and took into account both their interests and those of the host communities.

28. **Mr. Chu Guang** (China) said that the increasingly dire global refugee situation called for international solidarity and consensus-building. It was important to uphold the authority of the multilateral system, with the United Nations at the core; to respect each country's sovereignty and to leverage the United Nations and

other multilateral mechanisms. In that light, his delegation urged the General Assembly to adopt the global compact on refugees by consensus.

29. It was also necessary to eliminate the root causes of migration. Developing and developed States should address them in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and the international community should promote peace, stability, development and prosperity.

30. The response to the refugee issue should be guided by the principles of objectivity and neutrality. Refugee status must never be granted to criminals or terrorists, and refugee protection mechanisms must never be used as tools for interfering in any country's internal affairs.

31. As a State party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, China had provided substantial assistance to many developing countries. The High Commissioner's visit to China in August 2018 had led to many common understandings on deepening his country's bilateral cooperation with UNHCR. China stood ready to strengthen its cooperation with that body and to work with all parties to improve global refugee governance.

32. **Ms. Phasuphan** (Thailand) said that, working in close cooperation with Myanmar, her country had repatriated two groups of Myanmar refugees, and it was making preparations for the safe, voluntary and sustainable repatriation of another. With a view to sustainability, it had introduced livelihood programmes that would enable returning Myanmar refugees to support themselves. A memorandum of understanding recently signed among the relevant government agencies committed them to avoiding the indefinite detention of child refugees. In regard to reducing statelessness, Thailand supported the issuance of birth certificates for all children born in Thailand, and it remained committed to the UNHCR "I Belong" campaign to end statelessness by 2024.

33. Her Government underscored the need for responsibility-sharing and hoped that the global compact on refugees would strengthen international cooperation. It would continue to work closely with UNHCR and other partners to assist refugees and find durable solutions.

34. **Ms. Perišić** (Serbia) said that her delegation agreed on the urgency of more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing and looked forward to the adoption of the global compact on refugees. In the 1990s, Serbia had taken in hundreds of thousands of refugees from the former Yugoslavia, as well as internally displaced people from Kosovo and Metohija,

and it was still providing refuge to more than 225,000 individuals. With IOM assistance, it offered counselling to refugees interested in returning to Serbia and assistance in the return process.

35. As a transit country for refugees and migrants, Serbia had invested substantial resources to provide them with health care, food, medicine and information on asylum. All migrant children of elementary school age had access to education, regardless of their immigration status. In March 2018, her country had adopted a law on asylum and temporary protection that defined the rules and regulations on asylum-seekers in greater detail.

36. The Regional Housing Programme was an example of cooperation between host countries, countries of origin and international partners. In addition to its humanitarian aspect, the Programme facilitated reconciliation and good relations. In order to ensure sustainable conditions for the reintegration of returnees, it was essential for all participating countries to implement the Programme fully. There were still considerable problems for the integration or sustainable return of Croatian refugees living in Serbia.

37. After 19 years, only 1.9 per cent of internally displaced persons from the provinces of Kosovo and Metohija had achieved sustainable return. Violence against Serbs there continued unabated, and more than half of their property had been destroyed. Her Government would continue to cooperate with UNHCR and other partners to seek just and durable solutions for that population.

38. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan), noting that internally displaced persons represented over two-thirds of the forcibly displaced, said that it was important to pay significantly more attention to reducing internal displacement in the context of global pacts. Azerbaijan supported all efforts to raise awareness of the plight of internally displaced persons, to mainstream their rights in the United Nations system and to strengthen the international response to internal displacement. It was time to consider more solid protection frameworks, and in that context, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants represented a powerful step forward.

39. The occupation of Azerbaijani territories had caused massive internal displacement. Thanks to his Government's efforts, 300,000 internally displaced persons would have new housing by the end of 2018. However, in accordance with the preference of the displaced themselves, Azerbaijan would spare no effort to ensure their safe, voluntary and dignified return.

40. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that with the repercussions of displacement falling disproportionately on developing countries, every effort must be made to promote global responsibility- and burden-sharing when addressing refugee situations. Algeria was disappointed that, as in previous years, the report of the High Commissioner (A/73/12) focused in particular on the role played by donor countries in meeting the needs of refugees, but failed to give adequate attention to the situation of countries hosting large refugee populations. UNHCR must ensure that the efforts exerted by host countries and communities to meet the needs of refugees were given due consideration. UNHCR must also provide more information on the impact of refugees, including refugees living in protracted situations, on host countries' national development plans. Algeria was also disappointed that the report failed to give adequate attention to the challenges faced by countries in North Africa, which were often destination countries for migrants and refugees, as well as transit countries for migrants and refugees attempting to reach Europe. Algeria trusted that future reports of the High Commissioner would provide more information on the particular challenges that those countries faced.

41. To reduce the number of refugees and displaced persons worldwide, a comprehensive approach was needed that addressed the underlying causes of displacement, including poverty, underdevelopment, instability and disputes among States, which must be settled peacefully in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

42. Algeria was hosting many thousands of refugees, including large numbers of Sahrawi refugees who had fled their homes in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, and continued to advocate for their voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity within the framework of a durable solution that would uphold their right to self-determination. Regrettably, the report of the High Commissioner provided inaccurate figures for the numbers of refugees and displaced persons in Algeria. Algeria urged the Office of the High Commissioner to update those figures so that they accurately reflected the size of the Sahrawi refugee population. Algeria thanked donor countries who had provided assistance for the Sahrawi refugees on its territory and called on other countries to do likewise.

43. **Ms. Bouchikhi** (Morocco) said that, according to a UNHCR press release of 18 September 2018, in the absence of a full-fledged registration exercise, UNHCR would continue to use 90,000 as the official planning figure for the most vulnerable Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf Camps. Rather than sowing confusion about number of refugees in the camps, Algeria should allow

UNHCR to conduct a census in accordance with its obligations under international law.

44. Around a quarter of the world's displaced lived in Africa, and their numbers were growing. Her delegation commended the refugee-hosting countries of sub-Saharan Africa for remaining faithful to their long tradition of hospitality and solidarity. However, it was concerned that, despite strong donor support, refugee operations remained chronically underfunded, particularly in the case of protracted refugee situations.

45. Unfortunately, some refugee situations continued to be politicized. Noting that refugee-hosting countries were required under international law to permit the registration of refugees, she said that the attempts to link registration to political issues were unacceptable and further evidence that Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO were exploiting the situation of the refugees for political, economic and financial gain. In addition to embezzling humanitarian aid, they imposed value-added tax on the aid received, profiting from the misery of the residents and the generosity of the donors. It was no wonder that they opposed a census of the population.

46. **Ms. Duran** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), noting that internal displacement was increasingly urban, said that in recent years, humanitarian organizations had made efforts to respond better to the needs of displaced people living in towns and cities. In 2018, after interviewing hundreds of displaced people living in urban communities, ICRC had concluded that the humanitarian response was still inadequate. Humanitarian agencies continued to focus on people living in camps and relied too much on generic responses. There were gaps in the emergency and long-term response for people outside camps which, while often attributed to the scale and complexity of cities and limited experience in urban settings, could also be the result of rigid planning, inflexible funding, funding gaps, political interests and an absence of reliable data. The assumption that internally displaced people in urban settings were harder to identify and better off than those in camps might also explain the limited, disjointed response, and the lack of information about their needs could partially explain the reliance on blanket solutions. She urged all those involved in humanitarian work in urban communities to work together to improve the response to urban displacement. Together, they should take the time to study the needs and vulnerabilities of the urban displaced and their impact on host communities. They should provide broader, structural interventions and tailored solutions, and they should offer emergency support and build resilience

simultaneously from the outset. They should also explore and test new approaches. In an ever more urbanized world, meeting the urban challenge of internal displacement was essential.

47. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that, to address root causes, it was vital for destination countries to support peace processes and promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. They should also bear in mind that displaced people needed prospects for the future and help them to build that future. However, no country could meet the challenges of migration alone. Countries bearing the brunt of mass migration rightfully expected the international community to show solidarity and sensitivity with respect to burden- and responsibility-sharing.

48. As the largest refugee-hosting country, Turkey attached the utmost importance to the global compact on refugees, which provided the basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing and embodied an international understanding that displacement issues must be tackled globally in good faith. It was important to preserve a "whole of globe" approach and to keep international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing high on the international agenda. Turkey hoped that, with the adoption of the compact, more States would start to assume moral, political and legal responsibility, and it would continue to push for strong implementation of the compact.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.