



# General Assembly

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## Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sixty-fifth session

### Summary record of the 677th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 30 September 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Choi Seokyoung .....(Republic of Korea)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**High-level segment on enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa** (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Brende** (Norway) said that two out of the four current Level 3 emergencies were taking place in Africa and it was to be feared that a third might erupt in the near future in Somalia if nothing was done to prevent it. With that in mind, Norway had upped the level of its humanitarian aid to Africa. The seriousness of the current situation, coupled with the emergency caused by the Ebola epidemic, required a novel approach to humanitarian relief and official development assistance which should be used on the ground to prevent crises. Finding genuine political answers to ongoing crises was a matter of urgency. In South Sudan, where the civil war had displaced 1.7 million people, the Government and the opposition should make a determined effort to reach a solution, since that country was facing the worst food emergency on the planet. Climate change made it all the more necessary to forge stronger links between development, cooperation and humanitarian action. That was why Norway supported the Global Framework for Climate Services. Education, which offered a way out of extreme poverty and a means of protecting children in emergencies, was another fundamental area where those links had to be strengthened. Norway was going to double the amount of its education aid to US\$ 600 million in 2017 and would expand its partnerships with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In general, Norway was determined to overcome the obstacles to development which constituted the root causes of migration.

2. **Mr. Hamza** (Somalia) endorsed the statement made by Namibia on behalf of the Group of African States. Somalia was grateful to the neighbouring countries which had taken in 1 million Somali refugees. He thanked the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for endeavouring to promote peace. Regional solidarity had been displayed at the Ministerial Meeting on the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees, held in Addis Ababa, which had culminated in the adoption of a commitment towards those refugees. Lasting peace and stability in the country would be impossible without some solution for those refugees, who made up one fifth of the total Somali population and whose repatriation was vital to the country's economic and social development. Peace was, however, fragile and the return of the Al-Shabab terrorist group could not be ruled out, because the conditions which had led to its rise still existed.

3. **Mr. Ramadan** (Egypt) endorsed the statement made by Namibia on behalf of the Group of African States. UNHCR resources should be adjusted to keep pace with the rising tide of refugees and should take account of the need for assistance of the developing countries which received them. Egypt, which was a transit country for migrants, appealed for international cooperation to stem attempts to cross the Mediterranean by migrants in an irregular situation who set sail from Egyptian shores in perilous conditions. It urged the international community to help countries emerging from a conflict in order that their refugees might be able to return.

4. **Mr. Wagner** (France) said that the emphasis must be on the protection of refugees. That entailed the registration and recognition of identity documents, access to education and health and the possibility for refugees to earn a livelihood. France had taken vigorous action to contribute to stability in the region, in particular in Mali and the Central African Republic. A large number of displaced persons in Mali had been able to return to their region of origin after the country had been freed from terrorist occupation, and there were now no more than 126,000 such persons, in other words three times less than in July 2013. France had deployed its development aid policy to help its partners to consolidate

democracy and strengthen the rule of law. It had pledged €20 billion to the development of Africa over the following 10 years.

5. **Mr. Seilenthal** (Estonia) welcomed the entry into force of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), which was the first legally binding instrument to protect the rights and well-being of those forced to flee from their homes. Estonia encouraged States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention and those which had ratified it to incorporate it into their domestic law.

6. **Mr. de Crombrughe** (Belgium) was in favour of the international community helping to build the capacity of national institutions and NGOs responsible for refugee reception, registration and assistance in Africa, because close coordination between local and international actors offered the only means of dealing with such a huge challenge. Belgium maintained bilateral development cooperation relations with 14 African States and it supplemented that assistance with humanitarian relief in emergencies. It had helped several countries to establish favourable conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons and would continue to do so.

7. **Mr. Knutsson** (Sweden) endorsed the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. Sweden commended governments which had integrated long-standing refugees into their society and had recognized that they could make a positive contribution to their host country's development. It welcomed the Office's efforts to improve refugees' opportunities for self-reliance right from the outset of humanitarian response and called on the international community to offer more backing for those projects.

8. **Mr. Serra** (Italy) said that he was greatly concerned by human trafficking and smuggling, which were an offshoot of the emergencies in Africa. The Italian Presidency of the European Union was focusing on the international dimension of migration issues, especially in the Mediterranean. In November 2014 Italy was to launch the Khartoum Process (European Union-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative) in the belief that a better dialogue with the countries of origin and transit of migratory flows was essential if a solution were to be found to forced displacement.

9. **Mr. Lomonaco** (Mexico) said that it was necessary to adopt innovative approaches in order to find genuine solutions to refugees' problems. Humanitarian action had to go hand in hand with building development capacity while at the same time respecting humanitarian principles, above all the principles of non-discrimination and non-refoulement. Assistance to refugees had to be accompanied by a comprehensive response to their social, economic and development needs. In that respect, local communities played a vital role in development and in forestalling future emergencies.

10. **Ms. Kaji** (Japan) said that, as her country attached great importance to human safety and respect for each individual, it had been convening the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) every five years since 1993. In that framework, in 2014 it had hosted a meeting between South Sudan and its neighbouring countries and had pledged \$17 million to South Sudan. In the same year, during a visit to Africa, the Prime Minister of Japan had announced that Japan would support the African Union's efforts to foster peace and stability and would contribute some \$320 million to mitigating disasters and conflicts on that continent. Japan welcomed the launch in April 2014 of the Solutions Alliance, which set out to deal with the dilemma of long-term refugees.

11. **Ms. Teixeira Pinto** (Portugal) drew attention to "dormant" problems which required long-term solutions, in other words issues or conflicts which had ostensibly been resolved, but which flared up again owing to a lack of finance, or if the international community did not make a great enough effort, and which were further complicated by other serious emergencies such as the Ebola epidemic or the resurgence of terrorism. Closer involvement

by national authorities, regional organizations and civil society was necessary in order to find lasting solutions on the ground.

12. **Mr. Reaich** (New Zealand) said that his country had supported humanitarian response efforts for internally displaced persons in South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Somalia, in particular by supplying food aid. New Zealand also resettled refugees in its territory. It commended the African countries' leadership in improving the protection of persons of concern to UNHCR, but was still worried by food insecurity, the militarization of camps, sexual and gender-based violence and the plight of children.

13. **Mr. Gyhra** (Holy See) said that a renewed commitment to a policy of prevention was required urgently in order to reduce the number of forced displacements. To that end, it was essential to foster a people-centered culture of peace. It was also crucial to supply adequate protection to forcibly displaced persons, who were particularly vulnerable.

14. **Ms. Cordeiro Dunlop** (Brazil) commended the spirit of solidarity shown by the African countries in adopting the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa in Kampala in 2009. In Brazil, the decision to host refugees from African Countries had been taken even before the National Committee on Refugees had been set up in 1977. During the 1990s it had therefore received a large number of Angolans fleeing the civil war. Latterly Brazil had received many requests for asylum, chiefly from Syrians, Colombians and Congolese. The Brazilian Government intended to expand its national resettlement programme in order to take in new African refugees, especially young Congolese.

15. **Mr. Comissário** (Mozambique) said that international solidarity must complement the inter-African solidarity which had enabled many African countries to keep their borders open despite their internal difficulties. To be effective, solidarity had to rest on local capacities and, to that end, measures had to be taken to strengthen the resilience of refugees and local communities in order that they might remain self-supporting and preserve their environment. Greater efforts must be made to prevent conflicts and build peace. Mozambique's experience showed that a negotiated political settlement of conflicts was the *sine qua non* for the return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons.

16. **Mr. Kil Jeong Woo** (Republic of Korea) emphasized the crucial role of education in finding lasting solutions to crises and in improving refugees' resilience. In Africa a significant proportion of refugees were children. If they did not have proper access to education, a whole generation could be lost. The humanitarian crisis was being exacerbated by food insecurity throughout the African continent, which particularly affected women and children. The international community must redouble its efforts to overcome food shortages. It was also vital to address the root causes of the problem by encouraging sustainable development and focusing on the long-term socioeconomic needs of refugees' host countries and countries of origin. The Republic of Korea reaffirmed its commitment to increasing its humanitarian assistance to Africa.

17. **Mr. Nyuma Kortu** (Observer for Sierra Leone) said that Sierra Leone had learned from its experience as both a country of origin and a host country for a large number of refugees that it was necessary to find durable solutions to emergencies from the outset. Education programmes were vital for building capacities to facilitate refugees' voluntary repatriation, integration and resettlement. International solidarity must also seek to give refugees who returned to their home country a durable solution for reintegration. Sierra Leone wished to draw attention to the Ebola crisis in West Africa, which was likely to trigger a fresh flood of refugees.

18. **Mr. Bunnag** (Thailand) said that, as a country that had hosted more than 100,000 displaced persons for some 30 years, it knew the importance of international burden-sharing and of efforts to find lasting solutions to those situations. Special attention should be paid to

the protection of vulnerable groups, such as children and women, who were the main victims of sexual violence. Thailand was aware that the presence of women among peacekeeping forces played a very useful role in that respect, and it had therefore seconded women soldiers and observers to several United Nations missions, notably in the Sudan and Darfur.

19. **Mr. Meriguet Martinez** (Ecuador) said that Ecuador was the Latin American country which took in the largest number of refugees. He pointed out that people who were forced to flee on account of conflicts often had nothing to do with the underlying geopolitical and commercial interests which were one of the chief causes of humanitarian emergencies. Accordingly, showing solidarity with Africa was primarily a responsibility of the developed countries, which owed the African continent their economic growth and their own prosperity, and moreover had a long-standing debt towards it.

20. **Ms. Southern** (Australia) said that Australia was particularly concerned by the impact of Level 3 emergencies on South Sudan and the Central African Republic and by worsening food insecurity in East Africa. In the United Nations Security Council Australia was working to help mitigate crises in Africa. It had also provided more than \$45 million in humanitarian assistance to Africa over the previous 12 months, in support of the action taken by UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations on the continent. Australia noted the projections for the resettle of 50,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the coming years and was pleased to be an active participant in the Contact Group for Congolese refugees.

21. **Mr. Boukili** (Morocco) said that the international community's response to the issue of refugees and displaced persons in Africa must take account of the costs borne by African host countries and local communities and must address the causes of certain protracted crises, including the militarization of camps and the exploitation of humanitarian tragedies in furtherance of separatist agendas. A large proportion of Morocco's South-South cooperation was concerned with the refugee question in Africa. It had been the first country to react to the emergency in Mali by sending a substantial amount of food and medical aid to Malian refugees in Mauritania, the Niger and Burkina Faso. Morocco's commitment had also been reflected in the launch in 2013 of its new migration and asylum policy, prompted by a caring and, humanist attitude in constantly changing circumstances.

22. **Mr. Çarıkçı** (Turkey) said that relations between his country and Africa had become closer since the African Union's declaration of its strategic partnership with Turkey in 2008. The next Turkey-Africa partnership summit would be held in Malabo in November 2014. Turkey firmly supported efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and to that end it contributed to six United Nations missions in Africa. In 2013 it had supplied \$3.3 billion in total in development aid, more than a quarter of which had been destined for Africa, mainly Somalia.

23. **Mr. Staur** (Denmark) emphasized that displacement was not only a humanitarian issue but also a development challenge, and often even a development opportunity. In a more dynamic Africa a growing number of actors were seeking comprehensive, long-term solutions resting on development, for example in Zambia and Tanzania, and in Uganda, where refugees from South Sudan were given land to farm. Denmark welcomed the new Solutions Alliance, a network of actors which favoured an innovative, collaborative approach to displacement in order to avoid protracted crises. A national Solutions Alliance group had been set up in Zambia and another would soon be established in Somalia. Denmark hoped that that initiative would spread right across the African continent.

24. **Mr. Orjiako** (Nigeria) said that his country took in refugees from Eritrea, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, and Côte d'Ivoire, and they would return home once their countries again became stable. Owing

to the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram group, however, people along the eastern border of the country were having to seek refuge in other regions of Nigeria and in neighbouring countries. The Nigerian Government cooperated with those countries to ease their burden and it was determined to find a lasting solution to that problem, as shown by its recent ratification of the Kampala Convention on displaced persons. It also cooperated fully with the recent initiative by the United Nations to make an overall assessment of Nigeria's needs as far as displaced persons were concerned.

25. **Mr. Gerahutu** (Observer for Eritrea) said that his country had adopted a multipronged, practical approach to refugee aid in order to strengthen the internal momentum of development, assist refugees' voluntary repatriation and resettlement, foster cooperation based on partnership and support countries in difficulties. Although Eritrea remained a stable, peaceful country, it had had to face another exodus. The "no war, no peace" situation and the occupation of Eritrean territories had become major problems. The sanctions imposed on Eritrea by the United Nations were having an impact on the national economy and on the population's living conditions. Some countries were also trying to lure young Eritreans, especially women and children, with the promise of political asylum and a better life, but that had been accompanied by a growth in human trafficking and smuggling networks. Eritrea was actively combating human trafficking and had stepped up its coordinated action with Sudan and Egypt in that sphere. The Government had requested the opening of an independent United Nations inquiry into that matter and had recently acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the first Protocol to the Convention.

26. **Ms. Menéndez Perez** (Spain) said that, as part of its international cooperation activities, Spain carried out programmes related to peace, security and agricultural development, in conjunction with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union and together with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) it had set up a fund to promote the empowerment of African women.

27. **Ms. Sequensová** (Czech Republic) pointed out that some parties to conflicts hampered the supply of humanitarian aid. The Czech Republic undertook to continue its financial support of UNHCR programmes and operations in Africa and to increase its cooperation in the design and implementation of projects aimed at finding sustainable solutions in the countries and regions concerned.

28. **Mr. Reddy** (India) said that India encouraged UNHCR to work closely with African leaders to facilitate refugees' voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. The India-Africa Forum summits held in 2008 and 2011 had enabled India and African States to share their experiences and to establish capacity-building programmes. In that context, lines of credit worth \$5.4 billion had been opened for development projects. In order to combat the Ebola epidemic, India had made available \$12 million for United Nations activities and \$500,000 for action by the World Health Organization (WHO).

29. **Mr. Hoscheit** (Luxembourg) said that Luxembourg earmarked at least 5 per cent of its humanitarian budget for action to improve prevention and resilience through local capacity building. In 2014, Luxembourg had devoted €11 million to aid refugees in Africa, including €4.1 million to the Sahel region.

30. **Ms. Batistič Kos** (Croatia) said that development was the best tool for preventing the risk of conflicts that caused displacement. Aid to refugees must also extend to their countries of origin, since the latter's capacity to absorb returnees was often weakened or destroyed by the conflict which they had experienced.

31. **Mr. Adamou** (Observer for the Niger) said that, while some 5,000 Malian refugees had returned home with the gradual stabilization of the situation in Mali, the conditions for

the voluntary repatriation of the almost 51,000 Malian refugees hosted by the Niger since 2012 were being discussed by a special tripartite commission comprising the authorities of the Niger and Mali and UNHCR. Furthermore, on 4 December 2013, the Government of the Niger had adopted an administrative measure recognizing the refugee status of Nigerian citizens who had fled persecution by the Boko Haram group in northern Nigeria.

32. **Mr. Ababneh** (Jordan) thanked all those who had helped Jordan to take in Syrian refugees and he restated the importance of worldwide solidarity.

33. **Mr. Bashkin** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation commended the action of subregional organizations and UNHCR. In 2013 the Russian Federation had supplied equipment and food worth \$40 million. Russian doctors and medical equipment had been sent to Africa to combat the Ebola virus disease.

34. **Mr. Fasel** (Switzerland) said that political solutions to the crises in Africa were the only means of significantly reducing forced displacement on the continent. Switzerland supported the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees and the Addis Ababa Commitment to finding long-lasting solutions for the 1 million Somali in the Horn of Africa. It also supported the action taken by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to boost regional and national capacity to cope with mixed migratory flows in the region. Humanitarian aid must not be confined to emergency relief, but must offer long-term prospects to persons in distress.

35. **Ms. Bakels** (Netherlands) said that the Netherlands made a sizeable contribution to activities to assist refugees and displaced persons, especially in South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Netherlands undertook to continue its support for all those who helped refugees and internally displaced persons whose situation was no longer headlines news.

36. **The Chairperson** read out the Executive Committee's draft statement on enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa, the text of which would be included in the report of the sixty-fifth session of the Executive Committee (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room). The non-binding statement, which had been drawn up in close cooperation with the members of the Executive Committee, in particular with the Group of African States, recognized the existence of humanitarian emergencies and protracted refugee situations on the continent and of their effects on the region. It called on African States and the international community to make joint efforts to find a solution to those situations in a spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing.

37. *The draft statement was adopted by acclamation.*

38. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he was most grateful to members of the Executive Committee for their pledges of assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. Everyone agreed that the issue of displacement in Africa did not receive the attention it deserved in the media and on the world political stage. The countries bordering on conflict zones displayed extraordinary generosity and solidarity towards all those who needed protection. That generosity and solidarity were rooted in African culture and had been embodied in regional and national legal texts. The international community must provide more backing, particularly in the form of assistance to refugees and displaced persons and for the development of host communities, and also to governments and for preventive action and the quest for solutions by African leaders. The international community must also give more support to building the capacities of governments in the countries concerned. Agents of development must act soon in order to ensure that humanitarian aid no longer suffered from a lack of financial resources. The statement which had been adopted and discussions during the high-level

segment was evidence of everyone's commitment to succour the most vulnerable members of the population, who suffered so much in countries where conflicts lingered.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*