



# 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 683rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 3 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Choi Seo Kyoung .....(Republic of Korea)

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

**Consideration of reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation** (*continued*)

(ii) *Report on policy development and evaluation (A/AC.96/1139)*

1. **Mr. Macleod** (Head of Service, Policy Development and Evaluation Service – PDES) said that his service had taken on board the recommendations made following the evaluation capacity review conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), while maintaining the same level of performance. An evaluation of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) operations in Lebanon and Jordan had been carried out at the beginning of 2014, in line with OIOS recommendations. The fact that PDES wore three hats (policy development, research and evaluation) had raised suspicions on the grounds that it was not possible at the same time to develop and evaluate a policy. The Service focused more on the analysis of policies than on their development and he wished to continue with that approach in the future in order to avoid any potential conflict of interest. The Service had performed its traditional tasks in terms of protection, the search for lasting solutions and operations, without compromising the quality or relevance of its work, while searching for innovative ways to tackle issues.

2. The role played by UNHCR in providing assistance to States to enable them to determine refugee status had been reviewed, demonstrating that complex elements of the role of UNHCR could be evaluated precisely. That work would continue, enabling UNHCR to develop guidelines on which States and the organization itself could base their efforts to improve policies and procedures. The Service had also taken part in the work of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) group, contributing to the evaluation of the response to the emergency in South Sudan. Real-time evaluation work within the inter-agency group would continue, with an evaluation of the response of UNHCR to the situation in Central African Republic being planned for the near future.

3. On the research side, the Service had looked at different aspects of UNHCR employment policy and was working with the World Bank to develop a model for measuring refugee poverty and welfare. PDES had also carried out an evaluation of its urban refugee policy and would, in future, call on another service to carry out that task. With the financial support of the United States of America, PDES had also organized a series of workshops designed to create communities of practice among key stakeholders engaged in urban refugee policy and assistance. The Service continued to carry out work on the design and implementation of a decentralized evaluation policy and practice to ensure that, in future, its role would consist of offering technical support and guidance and monitoring the quality of decentralized valuation work. To that end, an on-line evaluation learning programme would be developed for staff working in the field.

4. **Ms. Bakels** (Netherlands) believed that an effective evaluation function was essential to the decision-making process regarding general policy. Thus, sufficient funds must be allocated to the development of an independent and separate evaluation function. She thanked UNHCR for having facilitated the review of the effectiveness of development carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. That exercise had marked the end of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) review carried out by UNHCR in 2014. Lastly, the Netherlands awaited with impatience the conclusions of the independent evaluation of the UNHCR response to the Syrian refugee emergency in the countries bordering Syria.

5. **Mr. Macleod** (Head of Service, Policy Development and Evaluation Service – PDES) said that the independent evaluation report was ready and should be published on the Internet by the end of November 2014.

**Consideration and adoption of the biennial programme budget 2014–2015 (revised)**

(A/AC.96/1136, A/AC.96/1136/Corr.1 and A/AC.96/1136/Add.1)

6. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner) presented the draft programme budget 2014–2015 (revised), which had been reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Standing Committee. The initial budget approved by the Executive Committee had stood at US\$ 5.3 billion. The updated budget stood at US\$ 6.2 billion as of 30 June 2014, which represented an increase of 17.5 per cent compared with the initial budget. At the end of 2013, it had been estimated that 51.2 million persons had been displaced by conflict and persecution worldwide, 42.9 million of whom were of direct concern to UNHCR. According to projections, that number should rise to 47.6 million in 2014; a record high in modern times.

7. The budget was still based on the Global Needs Assessment. The budget for 2015 was distributed among the four pillars as follows: 80.6 per cent for the refugee programme (pillar 1), mainly in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Kenya and Ethiopia; 1.1 per cent for the stateless persons programme (pillar 2); 3.8 per cent for reintegration projects (pillar 3); and 14.4 per cent for projects for internally displaced persons (pillar 4), mainly in the Syrian Arab Republic, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar and the Central African Republic. The global programmes budget had increased by US\$ 48.3 million compared with the requirements for 2014, mainly due to the planned strengthening of coordination and support to the field in many global priority areas. The headquarters budget had increased by US\$ 15.8 million but still only made up 4 per cent of the total budget.

8. The total number of posts projected should increase by 2.6 per cent in 2015. During the second half of the biennium, UNHCR would continue to address critical needs regarding field operations and to strengthen capacity in terms of protection and financial, programme and supply management, as well as upgrading its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and improving financial oversight.

9. In the view of ACABQ, the preparation of a resource plan could be of benefit in terms of the presentation of the UNHCR budget. However, UNHCR believed that the Global Needs Assessment better corresponded to the way the organization functioned because it received funding throughout the year and could not foresee future requirements.

10. **Ms. Pollack** (United States of America) said that the United States of America, which, with its contribution of US\$ 1.2 billion, was the main donor to the UNHCR budget, remained steadfast in its support for the organization's work. However, the donor countries had the right to expect enhanced oversight and greater transparency regarding the use of funds. It was also important to ensure that UNHCR had the capacity required to carry out all its tasks. The members of the Executive Committee were urged to provide flexible, robust, predictable, non-earmarked contributions. The United States of America supported the biennial budget and encouraged UNHCR to organize further informal consultative meetings on that issue during the course of the year. UNHCR should also adopt a more transparent decision-making process regarding priority setting and the distribution of contributions among pillars, geographical regions and camp and non-camp based populations, through mechanisms such as the Global Report and Global Focus. UNHCR must also precisely articulate what it was unable to accomplish due to funding gaps.

11. **Ms. Habtemariam** (Ethiopia) endorsed the statement made by Namibia on behalf of the African Group. Ethiopia was concerned about the proposal to reduce the budget for East and Horn of Africa by 15.2 per cent (US\$ 251.7 million), the largest of the proposed reductions. That would decrease the budget for Ethiopia, which was currently the country hosting the highest number of refugees in Africa. Any such move would have serious consequences for refugee protection and assistance work. Ethiopia called on the donor

countries and humanitarian organizations to provide additional assistance as a matter of urgency.

12. **Ms. Clifford** (Sweden) confirmed Sweden's support for the budget based on the Global Needs Assessment adopted by UNHCR, as a result of which it had been possible to increase contributions to their highest level in the past five years. Sweden was, however, concerned at the growing funding shortfall. It welcomed the information provided to the members of the Executive Committee on the planning and priority-setting process, particularly during the meetings of the Standing Committee. Sweden noted with interest the ACABQ proposal involving consultation with the Executive Committee on the feasibility of introducing a resource plan alongside the Global Needs Assessment-based budget for the next biennium. Sweden wished to continue discussions on that issue during the official consultations with UNHCR, to ensure that the budget truly reflected the needs of those persons of direct concern to UNHCR and that it served as a useful planning tool for the organization, its donors and its partners. Sweden was proud to be the main UNHCR donor in terms of non-earmarked funds, a fact that demonstrated the faith the country had in the organization. She called on the other donors to follow Sweden's example.

13. **Ms. Kumakura** (Japan) said that Japan had done all it could to contribute to the efforts of UNHCR. In late September, Japan had disbursed US\$ 182.25 million for 2014 and had increased the percentage of non-earmarked contributions from 43.1 per cent to 53.7 per cent. It was hoped that UNHCR would do everything possible to expand its donor base and increase private-sector fund raising. During the previous week, the Prime Minister of Japan had decided to provide UNHCR with US\$ 50 million in additional emergency aid for its operations in the Middle East; US\$ 4.7 million of that sum was for displaced persons in Iraq and US\$ 1.5 million for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

14. **Mr. Komen** (Kenya) expressed concern at the proposed reduction of the budget for Kenya, which was preparing to implement the tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees. He asked whether that operation was included in the budget allocated to Kenya.

15. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner) said that, in the interests of transparency, UNHCR would continue to provide information in its reports on the funding shortfall and to carry out consultations on the budget-preparation process. Thanks to successful ongoing fund-raising efforts among the Member States and private sector stakeholders, the funding shortfall had not worsened in relative terms. The organization owed its flexibility to the non-earmarked funds. As to the reduction in the budget for the countries of the Horn of Africa, the proposals were based on the stabilization of the region. Nonetheless, an additional budget would be created regarding the recent influx of refugees from South Sudan. Most of the budget for spontaneous returns would be allocated to Somalia. He thanked the United States of America for its exceptional contribution to UNHCR and pointed out that the organization was willing to adopt more transparent decision-making mechanisms.

*Draft general decision on administrative, financial and programme matters*  
(A/AC.96/1136)

16. **Mr. Reyes Castro** (Rapporteur) said that the draft general decision for 2014 involved the approval of the biennial programme and budget 2014–2015 (revised). Paragraphs (a) to (c) contained proposals to approve the revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters: US\$ 6,236,218,896 for 2014 and US\$ 6,234,449,630 for 2015. Furthermore, the draft decision authorized the High Commissioner to create additional budgets and launch special appeals regarding urgent needs not fully covered by the operating reserve. Lastly, he paid tribute to the valuable,

long-standing contribution of those countries hosting refugees, calling on the Member States to take note of the related burden and to facilitate efforts to find lasting solutions.

17. **The Chairperson** took it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the draft biennial programme and budget 2014–2015 as contained in the draft general decision.

18. *It was so decided.*

#### **Review of the annual consultations with the non-governmental organizations**

19. **Ms. Thomson** (Rapporteur for annual consultations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) said that the consultations held in 2014 had focused on the theme of “Women’s Leadership and Participation” owing to the fact that, notwithstanding decades of work on the issue, women and girls continued to face major obstacles in claiming and enjoying their rights. Forced displacement and statelessness all too often exacerbated existing inequalities and amplified the discrimination and hardship faced by women. During the consultations, the NGOs had referred to the five commitments to refugee women made by the High Commissioner, arguing that they should be extended to cover other issues such as statelessness, displaced persons and returnees. With regard to participation, women wished not only to participate but also to lead, and in order to achieve that aim, they must have access to education. Only 12 per cent of girl refugees were enrolled in secondary school. UNHCR must implement its education strategy in order to address that issue. Furthermore, the NGOs had pointed out that statelessness was often the result of the implementation of legislation that discriminated against women. Thus, in 27 States, women could not pass on their nationality to their children. Moreover, in more than 60 countries, women could not acquire, retain or change their nationality on an equal basis with men. NGOs therefore encouraged the members of the Executive Committee to support the full implementation of the 2013 Conclusion on Civil Registration and to put into practice Global Strategic Priority 2 on birth registration. The traditional approach to protection and assistance must be completely overhauled to cover countless other needs and rights, including those which were less visible, such as access to mental health services and psychosocial support. The NGOs had stated that the economic empowerment of women constituted an urgent protection measure for women and girls that enabled them to avoid adopting negative coping strategies. Lastly, the issue of violence against women must be addressed from the onset of all emergencies, with all victims receiving appropriate support.

20. **Ms. Schmidt-Martin** (Ireland) said that NGOs were implementing an increasing share of UNHCR programmes and often had the greatest access to vulnerable displaced communities. Thus, structured partnerships and dialogues with NGOs continued to be crucial. In order to further enhance those partnerships, Ireland urged UNHCR to ensure that the principles of partnership were fully understood and integrated at the field level. The organization was also encouraged to further improve its financial processes in order to support predictability. Ireland had attended the plenary discussion of the 2014 UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs and welcomed the Deputy High Commissioner’s remarks on the struggle to end violence against women and girls. Efforts to empower women must be stepped up and she wished to hear from UNHCR how the High Commissioner’s five commitments to refugee women could be updated.

21. **Mr. Tabah** (Canada) emphasized the vital role played by NGOs in providing protection and assistance to displaced persons, pointing to their close relationship with the affected communities and the related risks affecting their representatives in the field. Canada supported both the appeal made to UNHCR and its operational partners regarding the need to further empower women and girls and the proposal to update the High Commissioner’s five commitments in that regard.

22. **Ms. Pollack** (United States of America) welcomed UNHCR efforts regarding the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners, particularly in the areas of partner selection and retention, partnership agreements and joint monitoring. The United States of America funded two NGO networks with the aim of supporting the implementation of the Enhanced Framework by UNHCR. It had been working for many years on preventing gender-based violence, an issue that was at the top of the agenda of the Obama administration. The United States of America fully endorsed the decision by UNHCR to focus on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence from the outset of emergencies and welcomed the launching of the Ten-Year Campaign to End Statelessness. The importance accorded to education as a protection tool and the focus on protection at sea, particularly regarding women and children, during the consultations with the NGOs was noted with interest. Lastly, the United States of America took the issue of refugee resettlement very seriously and had achieved the goal of resettling almost 70,000 refugees per year in its territory over the course of the past two years. There were plans to increase such efforts, particularly with respect to Syrian refugees.

23. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the issue of joint monitoring and inspection of NGO partnerships had frequently arisen, although UNHCR had other more pressing concerns in that area. The main aim was to develop a strategic partnership with NGOs, as he was convinced that constant communication between political decision-makers and civil society was essential to any democratic system, as was the very real influence that such dialogue could have on political decisions. He wholeheartedly agreed that the five commitments to refugee women and, more specifically, the empowerment of women and girls, constituted a key objective.

#### **Other statements**

24. **Mr. Avognon** (Chairperson of the UNHCR Staff Council) noted with appreciation the importance that Member States attributed to staff safety and security, as humanitarian workers were all too often targeted by certain armed groups. In addition, the unprecedented outbreak of Ebola in West Africa was a major cause for concern for UNHCR staff in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. As to staff welfare, through resolution 65/248, adopted in 2010, the General Assembly had abolished the system of designated administrative duty stations, designed to enable staff members to have their families near to operational areas. That development constituted an obstacle to recruitment in those duty stations and would have a negative impact on operations. With regard to restructuring, the Staff Council recognized the importance of strengthening UNHCR expertise in specific fields and agreed that measures must be taken in that regard. Work to implement management reforms should also continue, although it was important to consult staff regarding the possible impact of that process on their working conditions. Furthermore, it seemed unfair that colleagues who had worked for UNHCR for over 10 years should continue to be offered one-year contracts, which left them unable to make long-term plans. The contract policy must thus be reviewed. Lastly, the Staff Council was strongly opposed to the new policy on fast track procedures, which ruled out the participation of the Council's central review body in the relevant process. As a result of the new policy, the required checks and balances that ensured transparency and equitable treatment when filling posts were being bypassed.

25. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the decision to restrict the rights of staff serving in non-family duty stations (affecting one third of the UNHCR workforce) had had a negative impact on the organization. He would do all he could to ensure that no additional measures were introduced in that regard.

### Meetings of the Standing Committee in 2015 and consideration of the provisional agenda of the sixty-sixth session of the Executive Committee

26. **Mr. Reyes Castro** (Rapporteur) said that decision 2, on the Standing Committee's programme in 2015, was a procedural decision that confirmed the usual framework adopted for the programme of work. As a part of that decision, UNHCR was also called upon to be explicit and analytical in its reports to the Committee and to submit documentation in a timely manner. The other two decisions were also procedural in nature. Decision 3 addressed the issue of observer participation in meetings of the Standing Committee and decision 4 involved the adoption of the provisional agenda of the sixty-sixth session in accordance with the working methods approved in 2004.

27. **The Chairperson** said that those decisions, which would be included in an annex to the report on the current session, would be submitted for adoption at the end of the session. As to the third decision, several Member States had officially requested authorization to attend as observers. The countries in question were the following: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Lithuania, Malaysia, Nepal and Panama. Those requests being acceptable, he proposed that the names of the States concerned should be added to the agreed text of draft decision 3.

28. *It was so decided.*

### Election of officers

29. **Ms. Böhlke-Möller** (Namibia) nominated **Mr. Comissário** (Mozambique) for the office of Chairperson.

30. **Mr. Knutsson** (Sweden) seconded the nomination.

31. *Mr. Comissário was elected Chairperson by acclamation.*

32. **Mr. Hoscheit** (Luxembourg) nominated **Mr. Staur** (Denmark) for the office of First Vice-Chairperson.

33. **Ms. Kaji** (Japan) seconded the nomination.

34. *Mr. Staur (Denmark) was elected First Vice-Chairperson by acclamation.*

35. **Mr. Quintana Aranguren** (Colombia) nominated **Ms. Goldberg** (Canada) for the office of Second Vice-Chairperson.

36. **Mr. Getahun** (Ethiopia) and **Mr. Mohamed Ismail** (Somalia) seconded the nomination.

37. *Ms. Goldberg (Canada) was elected Second Vice-Chairperson by acclamation.*

38. **The Chairperson** said that the Asia-Pacific Group, which was responsible for nominating a rapporteur, had yet to reach an agreement. He proposed that he should inform the members of the Executive Committee of the name of the candidate once it was known and that there would be an election by silent procedure in that regard.

39. *It was so decided.*

40. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed the recent ratification by Mozambique of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

**Adoption of the report of the sixty-fifth session of the Executive Committee** (document without a symbol, distributed in the meeting room)

41. **Mr. Reyes Castro** (Mexico) (Rapporteur) briefly presented the draft report of the sixty-fifth session. Sections I and II provided an overview of the work carried out during the session; section III contained the decisions adopted by the Executive Committee, and lastly the annexes contained the statement of the Executive Committee on the theme of “Enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa”, together with a summary of the general discussions drawn up by the Chairperson during the week. The final version of the report would be presented to the Third Committee of the General Assembly as an addendum to the annual report of the High Commissioner. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to reach a consensus on the draft conclusions on international protection.

42. *The draft report of the Executive Committee on the work of its sixty-fifth session was adopted.*

#### **Closure of the session**

43. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked all of the participants for their contributions and welcomed the positive and inclusive spirit in which the discussions had taken place. The work of the sixty-fifth session, which had seen the adoption of a statement following the high-level debate, was marked by a global commitment to finding solutions.

44. Regrettably, the issue of the safety and security of humanitarian workers had once again taken centre stage, following the death, the previous day, of Mr. Laurent DuPasquier. Mr. DuPasquier was an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegate, who had been killed in Donetsk, Ukraine, during a bombardment. The High Commissioner offered the family of Mr. DuPasquier and the ICRC his sincerest condolences. Unfortunately, that tragic incident illustrated the extent to which humanitarian space had been reduced.

45. He referred to the remarkable work carried out by Ms. Lim, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, who was due to retire in the near future, and thanked all the delegations for their supportive remarks regarding both himself and UNHCR and its activities. UNHCR would indulge in complacency, however, and would continue to do its best to live up to the trust placed in it. With regard to aid, the international community had reached a turning point: there were ever more conflicts; global trends, such as climate change, were on the rise, and human and financial resources were being stretched to their limits. The only way for the humanitarian system to tackle those issues was to bring together aid and development sector stakeholders. That was no easy task, given the wide variety of views and approaches existing both within and outside of the United Nations system. Although the multilateral humanitarian aid system was very much a western creation, it must take on a truly global dimension, since the practice of protecting refugees was one which had deep roots in the various cultures and regions across the world and which had existed long before the creation of UNHCR. Thought also needed to be given to the issue of the future of humanitarian aid in the digital era. It was important to be prepared to integrate a range of innovations in order to increase the effectiveness of aid, particularly in terms of funding, as had been done in the case of UNHCR.

46. Regarding the issue of the self-reliance of refugees, efforts should focus not so much on imposing local integration mechanisms, but rather on enabling the persons concerned to lead dignified, fulfilling lives, on reducing the cost of humanitarian aid, on contributing to grass-roots development, and on paving the way for desirable, lasting solutions in the form of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and integration at the local level. In order to ensure



that humanitarian action did not succumb to the many difficulties it needed to face, there must be a move away from a system under which humanitarian assistance was simply laid on to one which enabled the persons concerned to meet their own needs. In the short term, conflict-prevention activities were hardly likely to be effective. In order to prevent suffering, a different approach was required.

47. After the customary exchange of courtesies, **the Chairperson** declared the sixty-fifth session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees closed.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*