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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 43rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 November 2022, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Venancio Guerra (Vice-Chair) ..... (Portugal)

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Agenda item 57: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

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*In the absence of Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic), Mr. Venancio Guerra (Portugal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 57: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (continued)**

1. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that there was a need to address the root causes of forced displacement, in particular, conflict, a lag in development, occupation and climate change. Practical, lasting solutions based on the principles of international solidarity and burden sharing would be required to close the funding gap. Owing to the ongoing socioeconomic repercussions of the coronavirus disease COVID-19 pandemic, the number of refugees had risen dramatically. Host countries, most of them in the developing world, bore an ever greater burden, compounded by the so-called global inflation pandemic and the political agenda-driven allocation of donor contributions. As a result, the assistance extended to refugees was insufficient, hence the need to bolster multilateral efforts in support of the most vulnerable and strengthen the system for the protection of refugees.

2. A security-centred approach to managing the waves of forced displacement was deficient insofar as it failed to address the underlying issues. His delegation instead supported a comprehensive, preventive approach that took those issues into account and that found prompt, suitable solutions. Without a development-centred approach, the international community's efforts would be an exercise in futility, leaving abandoned refugees at the mercy of donors and failing to empower them economically, as called for in General Assembly resolutions. Assistance should be provided under a proper framework that ensured the predictability and sustainability of resources and that those resources reached the rightful beneficiaries. Furthermore, it was necessary to create a climate conducive to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensure that no-one was left behind.

3. Sahrawi refugees had received support from the Government of Algeria, which had hosted them for 45 years, while awaiting a definitive solution to their plight that would enable them to exercise their right to self-determination and return to their homeland. In the interim, his country had not hesitated to meet their needs. Algeria called on international donors to shoulder their responsibilities and respond to the calls of the Resident Coordinator in Algeria and agencies serving

Sahrawi refugees to address the repercussions of the food security crisis and the rise in the price of basic goods. In that context, Algeria called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to review the assistance it had extended and to follow the example of the World Food Programme.

4. **Ms. Ukaeje** (Nigeria) said that the global situation of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) had been exacerbated by drivers of displacement, and the Office of UNHCR was to be commended for its efforts to collaborate with Member States in the quest for durable solutions to the plight of persons of concern to the UNHCR. Member States hosting large numbers of persons of concern required burden- and responsibility-sharing measures to ensure and facilitate an adequate response to the challenges faced.

5. Nigeria had continued its efforts to ensure the implementation of the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum, by developing a road map based on the Global Compact on Refugees, which had been integrated into its medium-term national development plan for the period 2021–2025. The tripartite agreement with Cameroon and UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees living in Cameroon, and a similar agreement was being finalized with the Government of Niger. Nigeria had developed a humanitarian-development-peace nexus plan to come up with durable solutions, in collaboration with all persons of concern. The plan advocated for a development-oriented approach to localization, the capacity-building of local actors, and exit strategies for humanitarian interventions. In that connection, her Government was constructing housing units across the country as part of its resettlement project and, in collaboration with UNHCR and other partners, hundreds of houses, a marketplace, a police station, classrooms and other facilities had been constructed and handed over to the members of an internally displaced community.

6. Nigeria acknowledged the importance of self-reliance for persons of concern within the national economic framework and, as such, its Central Bank granted loan facilities and organized training programmes to support those persons. Her Government included persons of concern in the national social safety net scheme, and its inclusive approach provided a crucial foundation for their access to basic social services such as education and health care. As part of its efforts to address statelessness, Nigeria had established institutional and legal frameworks for the prevention and eradication of statelessness by 2024. The Government was strengthening its database of refugees,

asylum-seekers, returnees, IDPs, stateless persons and their children, in order to avoid the risk of statelessness.

7. Racism and discrimination were intolerable and had no place in the current world. Accordingly, Nigeria underscored the need to respect the inalienable rights of all persons of concern and ensure their protection under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Collaborative efforts were needed to address the drivers of displacement, and the international community needed to remain committed to the Global Compact on Refugees and to international cooperation, in order to ensure that persons of concern were accorded due assistance, protection and durable solutions.

8. **Ms. Mudrenko** (Ukraine) said that the Russian aggression against Ukraine had led to one of the most significant displacement crises in the world. After eight months of horror, the Russian war had uprooted one third of the Ukrainian population, mostly women and children, who had been displaced both within Ukraine and abroad. The war had also plunged the world into a multifaceted crisis and put millions of people in Asia, Africa and the Middle East at risk of famine. Ukrainian refugees were not likely to return to their homes in the near future and the refugee crisis in Europe could become protracted, leading to more permanent displacement. Russian attacks on critical civilian infrastructure in Ukraine were deliberately seeking to destroy energy facilities, in order to cut off the population's access to electricity, heating and water, and constituted a war crime. With the onset of the cold season, those actions threatened the survival of millions of people and could cause a new wave of migration.

9. Approximately 1.6 million Ukrainians had been forcibly transported or deported to remote regions of Russia, in violation of international humanitarian law, and thousands of Ukrainian children had been illegally transferred to Russia for adoption and indoctrination. Despite Russian attempts to portray those persons as refugees, under international humanitarian law they were victims of deportation or forcible transfers committed by the occupying power. Ukraine urged Russia to provide UNHCR and other humanitarian and human rights organizations with access to forcibly transferred Ukrainians, in particular children, including orphans and children deprived of parental care, in order to facilitate their safe return to Ukraine or their transfer to States with Ukrainian refugee support programmes.

10. Her delegation commended UNHCR, which had been working alongside Ukraine to help communities affected by the war, and over 2 million Ukrainians had already benefited from UNHCR assistance and protection. Ukraine greatly appreciated the

unprecedented decision by the European Union to offer and extend temporary social protection to Ukrainians fleeing the Russian war, and commended its neighbours and other countries, for hosting its citizens in a true demonstration of human and humanitarian solidarity.

11. **Mr. Bunch** (United States of America) said that the United States remained committed to humanitarianism, multilateralism, and supporting and protecting forcibly displaced and stateless people. His Government had responded decisively to new emergencies, including the unlawful and unprovoked Russian war in Ukraine, while also focusing on protracted crises that required sustained attention and resources. The United States was the single largest donor of international humanitarian assistance, and had provided its largest ever annual contribution of \$2.2 billion to UNHCR, in the previous fiscal year.

12. The Russian war in Ukraine had worsened a global food security crisis that disproportionately harmed forcibly displaced people, who often lacked access to livelihoods and social protection. Internal conflicts and climate shocks pushed people from their lands and stunted food production, while preventing food assistance from reaching those most in need. The United States was concerned by historic levels of global forced displacement and implored all Member States to support populations of concern to UNHCR, by providing not only funding, but also access to and support for durable solutions, as well as refugee inclusion, in order to improve quality of life for refugees and their host communities. As it continued to prioritize durable solutions and advocate for non-refoulement, the United States was deeply alarmed by increasing threats and reports of refoulement of Syrian refugees. UNHCR had declared Syria unsafe for return and Member States were urged to recommit to protection best practices and cease any plans for the involuntary return of refugees to Syria, which might violate their international legal obligations.

13. More needed to be done for refugees facing protracted crises. In 2022, the United States had provided close to \$358 million in humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya crisis, including for refugees who fled Myanmar to Bangladesh and elsewhere, while working towards durable solutions such as resettlement, employment, education and family reunification. His delegation welcomed the progress made by UNHCR on climate action, and appreciated the latter's efforts to provide critical resources to mitigate the impacts of climate change on forcibly displaced populations and their host communities, and to develop resilience against future crises.

14. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that the number of people forced to flee their homes as a result of conflict, persecution and violence was growing, and the issue of refugees, returnees, asylum-seekers and IDPs was threatening the maintenance of international peace and security. The UNHCR report reflected increasing internal displacements taking place in several countries, including Myanmar, where the illegal military coup of February 2021 and subsequent atrocities had led to forced mass displacement and left millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance, including many women and children. The latter were intentionally targeted for displacement and extremely vulnerable to challenges relating to food, nutrition, hygiene, shelter and possible human trafficking.

15. His delegation thanked Bangladesh for generously hosting the Rohingya people, who, along with other minorities across the country, had suffered terrible atrocities. His Government was committed to working with all relevant stakeholders to find a sustainable solution and provide them a voluntary, safe and dignified return. A policy position on the Rohingya had been issued, and their welfare, including health care and education in the camps, needed to be better safeguarded by the international community.

16. The military had been committing serious human rights violations in Myanmar, which amounted to crimes against humanity and war crimes, and had increasingly attacked the population with no regard for civilian lives. There was concern that the number of displaced persons and people fleeing to neighbouring countries would increase. Many refugees were already seeking international protection in India, Thailand and Malaysia, and his delegation thanked those host countries and asked them to provide the necessary assistance to its citizens. Individuals seeking international protection were in precarious situations, since they were in danger of death, torture and arrest in Myanmar, and facing potential arrest and deportation in neighbouring countries. Many were traumatized and had concerns for their health and safety, making assistance and protection an urgent requirement. Many displaced persons seeking UNHCR protection in neighbouring countries were distressed and frustrated, and there was a need for transparency and accessibility, with respect to relevant information and UNHCR offices.

17. **Ms. Ahangari** (Azerbaijan) said that the international community had a shared responsibility to address the root causes of displacement, ensure the safety and dignity of refugees and IDPs and find a durable solution that would enable forcibly displaced people to return to their homes. For almost three decades, as a result of conflict with Armenia, Azerbaijan

had had one of the largest populations of IDPs in the world, per capita, and her Government had assumed full responsibility for improving the living conditions of those communities, while encouraging the continued engagement of international organizations. After the signing of the trilateral statement of 10 November 2020, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani IDPs were able to return to their homes, and the engagement of UNHCR in that matter was appreciated. Her Government would continue to facilitate the return of all refugees and IDPs, in accordance with the trilateral statement.

18. Azerbaijan prioritized the rehabilitation and reconstruction of its liberated territories and their reintegration into the economy, in order to ensure the safe return of displaced populations. Practical steps had been taken to eliminate the consequences of the occupation, through the use of modern technologies. The first group of Azerbaijani IDPs had returned to a reconstructed village in a liberated district, and a State committee for refugee and IDP affairs had prepared an electronic management system to effectively and transparently implement mass returns. However, the safe return of displaced persons was being hampered by persistent challenges, such as the contamination of liberated territories by landmines and other explosive devices, which had killed or seriously injured hundreds of civilians and military personnel. General Assembly resolution [76/167](#) entitled “Protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons” expressed deep concern about the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of wars and improvised explosive devices to IDPs, and noted the urgency of providing protection from landmines. In that regard, obtaining maps of minefields and targeted, sustainable international technical and financial assistance was of critical importance for facilitating the return of IDPs.

19. **Ms. Alexandridou** (Greece) said that Greece continued to receive large numbers of arrivals and save lives at its land and sea borders, in keeping with the principle of non-refoulement. With the support of non-governmental organizations and human rights defenders, the Greek authorities were providing international protection and assistance to those in need. Greece was hosting a significant number of refugees, and developing effective integration policies, as well as policies promoting care for unaccompanied minors. Nonetheless, there had been a major shift in the “voluntary character” of cross border refugee movements since 2020, with the increased instrumentalization of human suffering at the external borders of the European Union, where people were used as mere tools of political pressure. The international community and relevant international organizations

needed to condemn such violations of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, international human rights law and customary international law.

20. **Mr. Serage** (Mozambique) said that UNHCR was doing commendable work in the most dangerous and adverse situations, including in Mozambique, which was both a country of origin and a destination country for thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers. As a country of origin, Mozambique wished to thank all the countries that had welcomed its people fleeing terrorist attacks and climate change-related events. The support provided by UNHCR, humanitarian organizations, foreign Governments and institutions was saving lives and making a difference. As a destination country, Mozambique was host to approximately 26,195 refugees, most of whom were living in urban areas.

21. Mozambique had increased access to education, health care and employment for refugees, and acknowledged that local integration was a durable solution that provided an opportunity for refugees to reconstruct their lives and contribute to the economic growth of local communities, by using their skills and knowledge for the development of the asylum country. His Government had made significant progress in the implementation of the pledges made at the first Global Refugee Forum, and had finalized a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR for a study on statelessness in Mozambique. Every effort would be made to provide refugees and asylum-seekers with the protection to which they were entitled under international and national legislation, and to guarantee access to education, health care and other social and economic services.

22. **Ms. Yapi Née Bah** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the number of forced displacements in the world was growing every year as a result of armed conflict, violence, ethnic or racial discrimination and the impact of climate change. To address challenges stemming from conflicts, her delegation urged the international community to abstain from any action that would jeopardize global peace and security, and focus rather on dialogue. With respect to the impact of climate change on population movements, solutions needed to be based on the rehabilitation of degraded lands, the combating of deforestation and the revision of public policy with a view to increasing investment in agriculture.

23. The Global Compact on Refugees was a key instrument for more efficient burden- and responsibility-sharing, and Côte d'Ivoire had met its commitments and made significant progress in achieving the four key objectives of the Compact. In that connection, the High Commissioner for Refugees had formally ended Ivorian

refugee status on 30 June 2022. After many years of open collaboration between Côte d'Ivoire and UNHCR, 92 per cent of the Ivorian refugees living in West Africa had returned to their homes. Notwithstanding that positive development, the ongoing instability in the Sahel region was a major cause for concern, since refugees from Mali and Burkina Faso were forced to seek safety in northern Côte d'Ivoire, and the latter needed the support of its partners and UNHCR to prevent a human catastrophe. Her delegation welcomed the international solidarity shown to displaced persons and urged all stakeholders to make greater financial efforts to close the financing gap of UNHCR.

24. **Mr. Sharma** (India) said that, in keeping with its ideals of compassion and empathy, India had a long-standing tradition of hosting refugees from all over the world, and had been facilitating voluntary repatriation and resettlement in accordance with national laws and mutual agreements with the States concerned. Using its own resources, India nurtured and protected refugee communities under its pluralistic framework, thereby enabling them to preserve their heritage, culture and language. It was a key international development partner and helped to find long-term and durable solutions to the refugee issue by building and strengthening the capacities of Member States, while also providing humanitarian assistance and undertaking disaster relief operations. The Indian Constitution guaranteed the basic rights and liberties of all persons, including non-citizens, and India remained committed to the principles of protection and non-refoulement.

25. The refugee issue was a global challenge that could not be solved by a single country. As such, India supported a global perspective involving all Member States and relevant stakeholders, with the United Nations playing a central role. It remained committed to the humanitarian protection of refugees, and the safeguarding of welfare objectives and national security. UNHCR was encouraged to continue building and using national capacities for protection and humanitarian action, while working with local responders to ensure the localization of solutions and ownership of the process.

26. **Ms. Lortkipanidze** (Georgia) said that her delegation welcomed the renewed strategic directions of UNHCR for the period 2022–2026, since the organization's efforts were of critical importance. Millions of Ukrainians had been forced to leave their homes in the wake of the unprovoked and unjustified Russian war against Ukraine, and the efforts of UNHCR and host countries to alleviate the plight of the displaced were greatly appreciated. Georgia had welcomed and was supporting over 28,000 Ukrainian refugees. Her

delegation acknowledged the work done by UNHCR to facilitate the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, which was a commitment and expression of the political will of States to resolve the refugee crisis. The Compact would engender a new pragmatic approach to a global system, with shared responsibility for building a safer, more humane and prosperous world, and Georgia had been very active during the preparatory and adoption processes, and at the first Global Refugee Forum.

27. Georgia was especially aware of the devastating impact of Russian aggression, since close to half a million Georgians had been expelled from their homes and had become IDPs and refugees, as a result of multiple waves of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Russian Federation in certain regions of Georgia. Those Georgian were still deprived of the right to return to their homes and Russian actions in the occupied territories had put many more people at the risk of becoming IDPs. The European Court of Human Rights had legally established that Russia was responsible for the violation of fundamental norms of international law, and had concluded that Russia had an obligation to enable persons of Georgian origin to return to their homes. In that context, the achievement of tangible results at the Geneva International Discussions and the role played by UNHCR at that forum were of particular importance. The destructive attitude demonstrated by Russia and its attempts to politicize humanitarian issues and prevent concrete results had been of particular concern.

28. **Ms. Silva** (Angola) said that Angola was a State party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and had based its national legislation on refugees and asylum-seekers on the principles of the Convention, as well as on international law, human rights norms and treaties. In 2017, Congolese refugees had fled conflict and violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and escaped to Angola, prompting UNHCR and the Government of Angola to declare an emergency situation. An agreement had later been established, granting asylum, assistance and protection to those refugees in an Angolan refugee settlement and neighbouring areas. The activities undertaken by UNHCR to address the consequences of multidimensional crises around the world were very challenging, given the rising number of refugees and IDPs, and required attention from Member States. Angola welcomed the work of humanitarian workers in the field to assist vulnerable persons around the world and the efforts of UNHCR to ensure that all refugees had access to essential health care, food security and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene services.

29. Over the years, her Government had demonstrated its unwavering commitment to the issue of refugees, in the light of its decades of experience in managing refugees and IDPs from various African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Angola was also committed to regional peacebuilding efforts and had become a police contributor to peacekeeping operations. Most asylum-seekers in Angola had been housed in a large settlement, and many of them had spontaneously returned to their homes or wished to be repatriated. Angola intended to apply for membership of the UNHCR executive committee, in order to further contribute to the management of refugees.

30. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the measures taken by his Government to facilitate the safe, voluntary return of Syrian nationals to their homes included the enactment of legislative decrees extending amnesty for registration of civil status and granting grace periods to nationals who had yet to complete their military service, allowing them to regularize their status and obtain personal documents at border posts on entry into the country. In addition, steps had been taken to facilitate the registration and entry into the country of children accompanied by their parents, and the ongoing process of national reconciliations encompassed Syrians living abroad, providing for their return.

31. Since 2020, three conferences on the return home of Syrian nationals had been held in Damascus, and reception centres for returnees had been established pursuant to the outcomes of those conferences. Regrettably, however, certain States and international organizations continued to politicize the return of Syrian refugees, with organizations including UNHCR not wishing to participate in the conferences.

32. Since liberating most of its territory from terrorist control, the Syrian Arab Republic had been working to restore normalcy through the rehabilitation of destroyed infrastructure and restoration of public services to the liberated areas. Legal and administrative measures had been adopted to facilitate the rehabilitation of more than 22,000 public facilities, with work on the remainder of those facilities under way and new ones being built. Government measures had contributed to enabling more than 1 million Syrian refugees to return home from Türkiye, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan.

33. The suffering and displacement of Syrians within and outside the country was caused by terrorism sponsored from abroad with the aim of fomenting chaos, unilateral coercive measures, and acts of aggression and occupation coupled with the theft and cross-border smuggling of natural resources. According to the

Ministry of Oil and Natural Resources of Syria, 80 per cent of all oil extracted daily was stolen by the occupying United States forces and their collaborators, accounting for the country's dire humanitarian situation, which was owed, in turn, to the continued scarcity of energy, food and drinking and irrigation water. Moreover, the Government's efforts continued to come up against the political agendas of those who manipulated Syrian suffering, undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and placing conditions on and preventing the return home of Syrian nationals by claiming that the country was not ready to receive them.

34. The expansion of basic services and early recovery projects and the rehabilitation of infrastructure would be vital in creating an environment conducive to the return of displaced Syrians. In order to alleviate the suffering of Syrians and expedite the return of the displaced, access to assistance within Syria must be improved, in line with Security Council resolution 2642 (2022). The Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Syrian Golan was the main driver of the forced displacement of more than 5 million Palestinian civilians and 500,000 Syrian civilians hailing from the Golan.

35. In closing, he said that the funding gap between the needs and existing resources continued to widen, and double standards and political considerations continued to govern the attitudes of many donors. It was vital for the provision of funding to UNHCR programmes and activities to be informed by humanitarian considerations. The Syrian Arab Republic requested UNHCR to increase funding for its activities and the proportion of non-earmarked contributions to enable it to respond effectively and unrestrictedly to protracted and emerging refugee situations.

36. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that the situation of refugees could not be addressed without tackling the underlying causes, and there was a need for political will to resolve conflicts peacefully. Non-interference in the affairs of States and stronger global partnerships to support sustainable development were critical. Countries of origin, transit and destination must fulfil their responsibilities, and the humanitarian nature of refugee protection mechanisms and instruments required safeguarding, in order to avoid politicization. Since resources to address human displacement were limited, UNHCR must focus on its core mandate of providing protection and assistance to refugees, instead of persons of concern or migrants. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the coordinated response efforts made by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration.

37. His delegation noted with concern the situation in some countries of transit, where refugees and migrants were subjected to violence, abuse and forced recruitment for armed conflicts, and urged UNHCR to extend full protection, cooperation and attention to all Eritrean nationals stranded in conflict areas, including those wishing to return voluntarily. Eritrea maintained a policy of voluntary repatriation of its nationals and was opposed to forced repatriations and expulsions. Bilateral agreements on the processing of asylum-seekers were also a cause for concern, since offshoring refugees from countries of arrival and shipping them off to another continent against their will was immoral and undignified, and amounted to inhumane treatment. Countries engaging in such practices were urged to review their policies and actions.

38. Eritrea stressed the importance of ensuring UNHCR engagement with countries of concern prior to the issuance of eligibility guidelines, since policy clarification should be sought directly from those countries. Eritrean economic migrants continued to be classified as "bona fide" refugees under UNHCR eligibility criteria, which contributed to a pull factor with devastating consequences. Migrants on their way to Europe faced unspeakable suffering at the hands of human traffickers and smugglers, and Eritrea urged UNHCR to accelerate its review of eligibility guidelines relating to Eritrea.

39. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that the number of refugees and displaced persons had surged to record levels, and the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the challenges brought about by wars, conflict, persecution and climate change. In addition, skyrocketing food, fuel and fertilizer prices had taken a further toll, especially on vulnerable populations. Those circumstances required more robust and collective efforts to meet growing protection needs and forge durable solutions, and UNHCR was to be commended for its dedication in discharging its responsibilities.

40. Despite the economic and social pressures it faced, Pakistan had shown unparalleled generosity and hospitality in hosting Afghan refugees for four decades, and had adhered to the highest standards of protection and facilitation, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were more than 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, who had access to the same health facilities as Pakistanis, government primary schools, higher education, bank accounts and numerous livelihood opportunities. Pakistan had also supported humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan by facilitating evacuations, establishing humanitarian air and land corridors, and providing food, medicines and other supplies. Pakistan valued the contribution of its regional

partners and UNHCR to the establishment of a support platform for Afghan refugees, which was based on three pillars: enabling conditions for voluntary repatriation; sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan; and support for host countries. It had co-convened the first Global Refugee Forum and remained committed to the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees.

41. His delegation valued the efforts made by UNHCR to broaden the support base for refugees and hoped that those efforts would result in tangible increases in humanitarian funding. It called on UNHCR to be sensitive to the regional and local requirements of host countries when devising its global operations policy, and to ensure that its policies were being implemented in keeping with local environments and conditions. With their limited resources, developing countries bore a disproportionate burden of refugee hosting, and refugee support financing instruments needed to be designed and implemented in ways that did not exacerbate the high debt burdens of those countries, so as to ensure equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

42. **Mr. Candido** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia was host to close to 1 million refugees from 26 countries, and was working tirelessly with UNHCR to address the challenges faced by refugees and create a conducive environment for them to remain in the country. Despite the obstacles it faced and insufficient international support, Ethiopia had made significant progress towards achieving its pledge as one of the conveners of the first Global Refugee Forum. It had incorporated refugees into the national education system at all levels and was providing primary health care services to refugees, in collaboration with UNHCR and other partners. A national road map was also being developed to integrate refugees into the national technical and vocational training system.

43. Climate-related events had a significant impact on population displacement and the state of refugees, and Ethiopia had been affected by that reality, as it had been hosting a large number of refugees over long periods of time. Different measures had been taken to overcome that challenge, such as enhancing access to clean energy and scaling up initiatives to plant seedlings in and around refugee camps. His Government had been working diligently to provide assistance to refugees in the northern region of the country, but Ethiopia needed the support of the international community to achieve further progress and ensure equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. While their efforts were commendable, Ethiopia called on UNHCR and other partners to enhance predictable and sustainable support to host countries.

44. **Mr. Fifield** (Australia) said that the multiple intersecting and complex crises of the previous year had stretched humanitarian organizations to their limits, and his delegation commended the tireless work of UNHCR and its personnel to address the needs of millions of people in crisis, under such challenging circumstances. Australia concurred with the call for increased efforts to accelerate implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees in the lead-up to the second Global Refugee Forum, and was encouraged by the willingness of the international community to cooperate with host countries on more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

45. Australia was concerned by the significant funding gap facing UNHCR and recognized that the response to the impact of the Russian war on Ukraine would require additional resources. The humanitarian system needed to be coordinated in its efforts to deliver effective and efficient responses, and partners were encouraged to provide flexible, unearmarked funding wherever possible. Global resettlement numbers remained insufficient, and his Government was committed to sustaining generous and flexible humanitarian settlement programmes, in order to meet its international protection obligations, and to progressively increasing the country's humanitarian intake. Australia recognized the need to look beyond traditional responses and provide additional pathways for refugees and displaced persons to safely move to third countries, including through labour mobility and sponsorship.

46. His delegation commended UNHCR for its increased focus on localization and meaningful refugee participation, and encouraged it to highlight and replicate leading examples, while working with more refugee and women-led organizations, since inclusive locally led responses were critical to effective, sustainable protection measures and solutions. Australia welcomed the UNHCR operational strategy for climate resilience and environmental sustainability for the period 2022–2025, since most refugees and IDPs came from the most climate-vulnerable parts of the world, and collective action was needed to address the impacts of climate change. It also welcomed the continued commitment of UNHCR to the participation of women in leadership and management in displacement situations, and appreciated its leadership on age, gender and diversity policies for refugees, stateless persons and displaced person.

47. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Türkiye) said that the human tragedy of displacement was compounded by the financial and socioeconomic hardships faced by host countries and communities, requiring meaningful



solidarity and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. Finding durable solutions to crises required the provision of humanitarian aid to the people in need and coordinated, multi-stakeholder efforts to strengthen the resilience of refugees and host communities. The international community must collectively address the root causes of forced displacement and take more responsibility for reversing current trends, reducing displacement levels and adopting preventive approaches. The Global Compact on Refugees reflected a common understanding that displacement issues must be tackled at the global level, with strong political will and international solidarity. Her delegation hoped that the second Global Refugee Forum would be another milestone in the joint quest to find long-term solutions for displaced persons and their host communities.

48. Türkiye recognized the unique role and mandate of UNHCR in assisting and protecting persons of concern in vulnerable situations, and appreciated all its staff and partner organizations who worked in difficult and dangerous situations to fulfil their mandate. While the efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UNHCR were commendable, its persistent funding gap was concerning, given the record levels of financial contributions from donors and the many efforts to diversify its donor base.

49. Türkiye had welcomed close to 4 million displaced persons, including mostly Syrians, and had provided them with free access to education, health services and the labour market. While its solidarity with Syria remained intact, Syrians needed to be able to safely and peacefully return to their homes, with a view to rebuilding their country and establishing lasting peace. The creation of conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees should be an integral part of overall efforts to address displacement issues. As the country hosting the largest refugee population in the world, Türkiye would continue to underscore the collective responsibility of the international community to safeguard the rights of people on the move, in keeping with the tenets of human dignity. Unfortunately, however, significant increases in pushback practices, which were not permitted under international humanitarian law, would certainly lead to further human tragedies; all countries were urged to cease the degrading and life-threatening treatment of migrants and refugees.

50. **Mr. Lamce** (Albania) said that the combined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing wars, increased food insecurity and the worsening global climate emergency had caused humanitarian needs to suddenly grow to unprecedented levels, and had resulted in a dire humanitarian situation in many parts of the

world. The unlawful and unjustified Russian attack on Ukraine had caused the largest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War, with millions of Ukrainians being forced to leave their country and millions more being internally displaced. Persons fleeing conflicts, especially women and girls, were faced with heightened risks of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking and exploitation. Assessments had revealed that the primary concerns for women and girls included threats to physical safety, food insecurity, and lack of access to health care, including reproductive health services, care for survivors of rape and mental health services.

51. The focus needed to be placed on searching for solutions and helping people to rebuild their lives in their countries of origin. Displaced persons required greater protection, and greater attention should be paid to the voices of refugees, United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners. The principles of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees must be implemented, along with legal and policy tools for effective international protection. The work of United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners required greater support and increased funding, in order to increase humanitarian access to those in need, including displaced persons and returnees. Procedures needed to be facilitated, with a view to creating the conditions required for the safe return of displaced persons to their countries of origin.

52. His Government had taken decisive steps in recent years to increase support for refugees and displaced people. Thousands of Afghans, including adults and children, had arrived in Albania, and all of them were cared for and safe. Albania was providing basic needs and shelter, while working closely with other partners to provide additional support for education, health care and protection. His Government had made every effort to provide Ukrainian refugees living in Albania with all the necessary services, including education and health services. A new law on citizenship provided for the unrestricted granting of Albanian citizenship to all children born in the country, who would otherwise be stateless. The Albanian ministry of education had issued guidelines on registration and support for the education of children in situations of migration, refugee children, unaccompanied refugee children, children turned back from migration, children from conflict zones and child victims of trafficking.

53. **Ms. Leković** (Montenegro) said that the unpredictable situation brought about by the food, climate and energy crisis, and ongoing conflicts, required urgent actions and responses based on responsibility-sharing and solidarity. Montenegro had

provided shelter to a significant number of displaced persons who had fled the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and had made great progress in improving their socioeconomic status and resolving their legal status. Through a regional housing programme and in cooperation with neighbouring countries and international partners, Montenegro had provided permanent housing for thousands of displaced and internally displaced persons. It had also adopted a new law on foreigners, with a view to eliminating statelessness.

54. The international community needed to stand together against the unjustified and unprovoked Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, which was a severe violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international humanitarian law, and had led millions of people to flee their homes, resulting in the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Montenegro had been one of the first countries in the region to respond, by keeping its borders open from the start of the war, and her Government had recently adopted a decision on the protection of Ukrainian refugees and established a body to ensure its implementation. The UNHCR office in Montenegro actively participated in the work of that body, and her Government remained committed to cooperating with all partners, and particularly the International Organization for Migration and the European Union, to ensure comprehensive protection for those in need. The second Global Refugee Forum would be an opportunity to further strengthen global solidarity and Montenegro would continue to work towards providing protection and sustainable solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and other persons of concern.

55. **Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan) said that conflicts, persecution, climate change and other factors had led to a substantial and rapid increase in the number of displaced persons worldwide. Japan was concerned that the global food crisis and soaring fuel prices triggered by the Russian aggression against Ukraine would put refugees and displaced persons in different parts of the world in an even more difficult situation. His Government had been cooperating with UNHCR and host countries to provide emergency humanitarian assistance, relief supplies and transport cooperation for Ukrainians who had fled to neighbouring countries and would continue to provide assistance, since the humanitarian needs were significant. However, his delegation was concerned that while funds were being raised for the situation in Ukraine, other humanitarian crises were not being adequately funded. Japan would continue to provide as much support as possible, in order to ensure that refugees and displaced persons

around the world and their host countries were not forgotten.

56. Japan supported the Global Compact on Refugees and would co-sponsor the second Global Refugee Forum, with the aim of helping to achieve the objectives of the Compact, which included reducing the burden of host countries and expanding opportunities for refugees to be admitted to third countries. As the international order continued to face challenges, people seeking safety, especially women and children, needed more support from the international community, and the role of UNHCR was increasingly important.

57. **Ms. Nabeta** (Uganda) said that Uganda was host to a large number of refugees from neighbouring countries and one of the top refugee hosting countries in the world, and her delegation thanked the United Nations, Member States and other development partners for their support and assistance. Uganda remained committed to fulfilling its responsibilities and obligations in addressing the plight of refugees, under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

58. The African Union had declared 2019 the African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa, and had committed to addressing the structural and root causes of displacement. African leaders had undertaken to use bold and effective political leadership to resolve conflicts on the continent, by adopting policies and strategies that would strengthen national systems and structures, in order to prevent conflict and displacement and find durable solutions to forced displacement. The African Union had also recognized that natural disasters and climate change could exacerbate existing violent conflicts, threaten access to vital resources and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, thereby resulting in displacement, and had called on its Member States to strengthen measures to address the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, especially in areas affected by conflict. Uganda was working closely with the United Nations and other development partners to address the root causes of displacement, and would continue to promote peace and security in the region.

59. **Mr. Holovka** (Serbia) said that Serbia continued to be one of the countries with the highest number of IDPs in Europe, and only one of five countries in the world with a protracted displacement crisis. As a result of the wars in the 1990s, more than half a million Serbs had been forced to flee or were expelled from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia had been making efforts to provide them with appropriate

reception, care and conditions for a sustainable return to their homes, despite the lack of understanding and willingness it sometimes encountered from the other parties involved. Serbia had also been grappling with the issue of internal displacement for over two decades, since hundreds of thousands of people had been forced to leave their homes in the southern province of Kosovo and Metohija, and regretted that the conditions for a sustainable return had not been met. After more than 20 years, less than 2 per cent of IDPs had managed to return to their homes in that southern province. In that regard, his Government expected the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement of the Secretary-General to help create a framework for a new approach to solving the situation of protracted internal displacement in Serbia, and supported the three objectives of the Action Agenda.

60. His delegation took note of the record numbers of refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs worldwide, which were a devastating consequence of current global challenges. Serbia remained committed to caring for migrants moving towards other European countries and, since 2015, 1.5 million migrants had passed through the country, while thousands were currently housed in reception centres. His Government was also contributing to relief efforts for Ukrainian refugees, and had donated a total of 3 million euro to that cause, half of which was channelled through UNHCR. Finding a permanent solution to the issue of forced displacement was in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, and Serbia was the first country to incorporate the principle of leaving no one behind into its legislative framework.

61. **Ms. Bouzid** (Morocco) said that the Algerian delegation had once again attempted to instrumentalize and politicize the Committee's discussions, in order to promote its biased political agenda on the issue of the Moroccan Sahara. The Security Council had recently adopted a resolution that once again established and enshrined the sole parameters for resolving that regional dispute, namely a political, realistic, pragmatic and sustainable solution based on compromise, which was the very incarnation of the Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region. Among other things, the resolution included important developments, in terms of the registration and census-taking of the populations being held in the Tindouf camps. In that context, Algeria was urged to take part in negotiations and fulfil its responsibilities as a main party to the regional conflict. Contrary to the erroneous assertions of Algeria, the issue of the Moroccan Sahara was one of Moroccan territorial integrity and national unity.

62. Algeria had yet again contravened international law and United Nations conventions in several ways. Responsibility-sharing and solidarity were closely associated and, in that connection, it was imperative to note that Algeria was responsible for ensuring that conditions were met for the registration of persons being held in the Tindouf camps. All Security Council resolutions had continuously called on Algeria to allow UNHCR to carry out a census of all persons in the camps, in keeping with its mandate, as it was allowed to do everywhere else in the world. Morocco strongly denounced the exploitation and instrumentalization of the people being held in the Tindouf camps for the benefit of the Algerian political agenda. Algeria had a legal, political and moral responsibility in the matter, and was jeopardizing Morocco's security, through the instrumentalization and militarization of the Sahrawi people, leading Morocco to question whether humanitarian aid was being used to purchase weapons. A terrible aspect of that instrumentalization and militarization was the recruitment of Sahrawi child soldiers within the camps. Morocco would continue to work tirelessly and had inaugurated an international research centre for the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers.

63. There were proven links between the Polisario Front and Sahelian terrorist groups, and the Algerian delegation was reminded that a certain terrorist, member of the Polisario Front, had lived for a long time in the Tindouf camps. Furthermore, Algeria and the Polisario Front had been shamelessly misappropriating international humanitarian aid for almost five decades, as confirmed by the European Anti-fraud Office and the European Union. Attitudes towards refugees and the inhabitants of the Tindouf camps should serve as a guideline for the region and reflect its respect for humanitarian principles and law.

64. **Ms. Gomez Zepeda** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were uniquely positioned to reach the most vulnerable, and provided a range of humanitarian services to millions of people on the move each year. Their staff and volunteers helped to address barriers of exclusion and discrimination through a holistic approach to providing food, water, housing, employment, education and health services and, in so doing, fostered greater integration into host communities.

65. As humanitarian needs grew, there was a need to ensure that all refugees and displaced persons were treated with dignity, and IFRC was scaling up actions for people on the move. In that connection, it called on

the international community to ensure that all people on the move had access to essential services during their migration journey, especially quality health and mental health services, and psychosocial support, which were also vital for frontline humanitarian workers; provide scalable and timely cash assistance, in order to enable the most vulnerable to prioritize their own needs, and facilitate social protection, faster integration, economic activity and voluntary return; scale up early disaster risk reduction measures, climate-smart adaptation and resilience-building initiatives; and ensure the integration of local actors, including refugee-led and host-led organizations, which were often the first responders to large-scale movements of people.

66. IFRC and UNHCR had been working together for over 50 years, and their recently renewed memorandum of understanding continued to affirm their partnership and their commitment to advance the Global Compact on refugees. Increased international solidarity and humanitarian assistance were needed to fully take into account the needs, skills, lives and suffering of refugees and asylum-seekers.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

67. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that, in her statement, the representative of Ukraine had preferred spreading disinformation and accusations against the Russian Federation to speaking about ways in which the nationalist Kiev regime helped refugees and displaced persons. The Kiev regime was pursuing a policy of eradicating the Russian identity in Ukraine and thus did not divulge information about the situation of minorities. According to the most recent national census in Ukraine, conducted in 2001, the country had 8 million Russians and Russian-speaking inhabitants, although by the time of the 2014 coup d'état that number had probably grown. Following the civil war unleashed by Kiev against the population in south-eastern Ukraine, 4.5 million refugees had abandoned former regions of Ukraine and sought protection in territories belonging to Russia. They had left voluntarily to avoid constant shelling and debasement.

68. The Ukrainian representative had requested in her statement the return to Ukraine of Russian-speaking children, but she had failed to mention the discriminatory laws adopted in Ukraine on education and on the use of Ukrainian as the official State language. Since 2020, Russian-language schools no longer existed in Ukraine and by September 2022, the teaching of Russian had been entirely removed from the school curriculum, even as an optional foreign language. Any Russian-speaking children who returned to Ukraine would effectively be subjected to forced Ukrainization,

which clearly violated norms and requirements on the promotion and protection human rights and the rights of minorities.

69. The Ukrainian representative had also incorrectly asserted that Russia was playing a kind of “hunger games”. The Russian Federation was party to the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports but the food exported from Ukraine had disproportionately gone to European Union countries, with developing countries receiving only 3 per cent of the total. Ukraine was also using civilian vessels to perpetrate terrorist drone attacks against Sebastopol. Equally unacceptable was the fact that, according to information gathered by the Russian Federation, British experts based in the port of Ochakov had helped the Kiev regime to carry out those attacks.

70. With regard to accusations of “imperialist goals”, the representative of Ukraine was clearly confusing the Russian Federation with the United States, which was assisting the Kiev regime.

71. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that the allegations made by the representative of Morocco, the occupying Power in Western Sahara, were utter fabrications intended to justify its illegal, immoral stance. Western Sahara was a Non-Self-Governing Territory on the agenda of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had been tasked with organizing a free and transparent referendum in order to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise its right to self-determination. A census of Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf refugee camp should be part of that broader, comprehensive effort, not a mere technical exercise. Noting the occupying Power's apparent obsession with the census, he recalled that UNHCR had carried out an approximate count of the population during its 2017 visit to the Tindouf camps, in order to better meet the needs of camp residents.

72. His delegation rejected in the strongest terms the spurious allegations of embezzlement of humanitarian assistance intended for Sahrawi refugees. In 2020, following an internal investigation, the European Commissioner for Crisis Management had ruled out the possibility of embezzlement and had confirmed that that assistance was subject to strict oversight and guarantees to prevent the misappropriation thereof. It was highly unlikely that donors would remain silent on the embezzlement of aid. Furthermore, there was no evidence bearing out such allegations in any United Nations report.

73. With respect to the alleged use of unmanned aerial vehicles by Sahrawis, the occupying Power, not satisfied with the spectacle put on by its Permanent Representative after the Security Council had renewed the mandate of MINURSO, had decided to bring its lies to the Committee, ignoring the contents of the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council. In that report, the Secretary-General had confirmed that it was the Royal Moroccan Army, not Sahrawis, that had been killing civilians using unmanned aerial vehicles. As for the alleged links between Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) and terrorist organizations, it could be said that Morocco itself was a leading State sponsor of terrorism if the relevant criterion was the individual membership of its nationals in terrorist organizations, given the sheer number of Moroccan nationals in the Da'esh ranks. In closing, he reiterated that the question of Western Sahara was a decolonization question that could only be resolved by holding a free, fair and transparent referendum that would enable the people of the Territory to exercise their right to self-determination.

74. **Ms. Bouzid** (Morocco) said that Algeria was attempting to pass itself off as a responsible actor in humanitarian efforts, but the reality was quite different. Algeria had not welcomed the populations into the Tindouf camps, but was holding them there against their will, without protecting their rights. Those rights were being violated with impunity on a daily basis. Algeria did not provide humanitarian aid to those populations, but instead deprived them of that aid by misappropriating humanitarian assistance with the complicity of the leaders of the Polisario Front. Algeria had in fact been in violation of international humanitarian law, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and, since 2011, the resolutions of the Security Council, since it was depriving the people in the Tindouf camps of their fundamental right to be registered and counted by UNHCR, and refusing to allow them to make their own choices and find a sustainable solution.

75. The shameful misappropriation of humanitarian funds for close to five decades had been documented in the reports of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Union and UNHCR. Young children in the Tindouf camps had been enlisted by force by the armed separatist groups, with the participation and blessing of Algeria, which deprived them of their rights, in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which Algeria was a State party. Such serious

violations of international law were unacceptable and amounted to crimes against humanity and war crimes, according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. That information was contained in reports and accompanied by evidence in the form of photographs. The Polisario Front was ideologically indoctrinating children in the Tindouf camps and separating them from their families.

76. Algeria claimed to be a mere observer in the Moroccan Sahara, and its delegation needed to indicate which country had been hosting the Polisario Group on its territory and financing it for over 50 years, which country was holding people hostage in the Tindouf camps, which country was financing and advising the Polisario Front, which country was devoting all of its diplomatic efforts to the issue of the Moroccan Sahara, and which country was the only one to have broken off relations with other countries solely because of their support for the autonomy initiative. The reports of the United Nations and the resolutions of both the General Assembly and the Security Council had pointed to the responsibility of Algeria, which needed to answer questions, uncover the truth and reveal its intentions. The UNHCR should be allowed to register the refugees, in order to determine the exact number of persons in the camps and ensure that appropriate humanitarian aid reached those in need.

77. **Mr. Sahraoui** (Algeria) said that the representative of Morocco persisted in spouting incoherent falsehoods. If, as she claimed, Algeria was financing Frente POLISARIO, why would it need to steal humanitarian aid? His delegation failed to comprehend the fixation of the delegation of Morocco on conducting a census of the camp population. Following the 2017 visit by UNHCR, during which it had conducted a count of the population, the Security Council had, in its resolution [2351 \(2017\)](#), called for increased international assistance for the Sahrawi people, a call to which the World Food Programme had responded. Any organization wishing to visit the camps was able to do so without any interference from the Algerian authorities. Rather, it was the Moroccan authorities that, in a manner befitting an occupier, had prevented the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and others from visiting the Territory or meeting representatives of Sahrawi civil society.

78. Claims that child soldiers were being recruited in the Tindouf refugee camps were delusional. In January 2022, the representative of the Secretary-General himself had denied the existence of child soldier activity in the camps, a phenomenon unattested in any United Nations report. By alleging the contrary, the representative of Morocco was in effect accusing not

only Algeria but the entire Organization of covering up such activity. Lastly, the presence of Sahrawis in Algeria was simply the result of occupation of Sahrawi land by Morocco; Algeria was not detaining anyone. The availability of United Nations reports to the public ultimately precluded such fabrications.

79. **Ms. Bouzid** (Morocco) said that resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the European Union, the World Food Programme and OLAF all confirmed that the question of counting the Tindouf refugee camp population was a politicized one and that Algeria, as host country, persistently refused to allow UNHCR to conduct a full census of the camp population. Obtaining an accurate count of that population was a legitimate and practical condition that went hand in hand with supplying humanitarian assistance.

80. With regard to allegations that Morocco was publishing photos of a non-existent child soldier phenomenon, she stressed that senior United Nations officials had stated that the photos in question had indeed been taken in the Tindouf camps in Algeria and that, to their knowledge, they had not been doctored. Recruitment of child soldiers in Algeria indeed persisted.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*