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## Committee for Programme and Coordination

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### Draft report

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#### Addendum

### Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2025

(Item 3 (a))

#### Programme 21

### International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 14 May 2024, the Committee considered programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance in 2023 ([A/79/6 \(Sect. 25\)](#)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan by sectoral, functional and regional bodies ([E/AC.51/2024/6](#)).

#### Discussion

2. Delegations expressed appreciation for the work carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and indicated their support for its mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and international protection to forcibly displaced persons and achieve durable solutions. A number of delegations acknowledged the crucial role of UNHCR as the main international agency for the protection of those categories of persons, in particular in the context of the increasing number of people around the world that were forced to leave their homes. It was recognized that the global refugee situation remained grim in the face of regional conflicts, economic downturn, climate change, natural disasters and a multitude of other factors.

3. A delegation observed that, with more than 130 million displaced persons estimated worldwide, there was a significant strain on the humanitarian system and that, while humanitarian needs continued to increase, the humanitarian system faced significant financial constraints. The view was expressed that the impact of those



dynamics were felt not only by the people affected and their host communities, but also by UNHCR and other agencies. In that regard, the delegation stressed the importance of inter-agency cooperation and efficiency, which were especially vital in times of financial constraints. It was observed that, even though efficiency had been a key issue on the humanitarian policy agenda for a decade, it had gained additional importance as humanitarian needs grew while resources decreased. The delegation further opined that efficiency required focus on one's mandate, reliance on comparative advantages and improved coordination of the division of labour between UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and the humanitarian system as a whole.

4. Some delegations welcomed the comprehensive presentation in the programme plan. A delegation observed that, even though the title of the programme included a reference to assistance to refugees, the objective did not include such a reference, and expressed the view that the question of assistance was not emphasized enough in the proposed programme plan.

5. While a delegation welcomed the reference in the programme to the role of the Global Compact on Refugees in achieving sustainable solutions for those affected, another delegation expressed reservations about the Compact, noting that it was not legally binding. The delegation stated that its implementation should be coordinated and aligned with the rules and regulations of the host country.

6. Several delegations welcomed the Global Refugee Forum held in December 2023 and expressed their appreciation for the high number of pledges made to support the work of UNHCR. In that regard, a delegation indicated that it looked forward to working closely with UNHCR, fellow Member States and with refugees themselves to sustain the momentum generated by the Forum in 2023. The delegation was committed to help to drive forward the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Delegations expressed that, while the progress was commendable, they were concerned about the emergent trend of new displacements outpacing durable solutions and the increasingly protracted nature of refugees' displacement.

7. It was noted that, in addition to maintaining progress through the Global Compact on Refugees process, longer-term approaches were required to address the challenging landscape, in particular through the prioritization of stronger partnerships with development actors to foster capacity-building and inclusion. The view was expressed that development-led activities, especially education, were essential in laying the foundations for solutions to support both refugees and host communities alike.

8. A delegation opined that UNHCR was the principal international organization responsible for addressing issues of forced migration and expressed its conviction that the United Nations should play a central coordinating role in the use of multilateral cooperation mechanisms to solve large-scale migration crises. Several delegations noted that approaches to overcoming migration challenges should comply with the basic principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and that the measures taken should not violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Another delegation noted with appreciation the efforts of UNHCR over the past year to strengthen international coordination in refugee protection and emergency response efforts, while noting that refugee protection should adhere to the principle of neutrality. It was also emphasized that UNHCR needed to focus on the root causes of displacement.

9. A delegation noted that low- and middle-income countries hosted around 90 per cent of refugee populations and displaced people and expressed the view that their efforts should be met with sustained and predictable support by the international community. In that regard, one delegation expressed its concern regarding the concept of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing as prescribed in the Global Compact on Refugees. Several delegations emphasized the importance of equitable burden-

and responsibility-sharing and opined that, while it was mentioned in the programme plan, it should have been reflected more prevalently as a top priority for UNHCR.

10. Several delegations noted that their countries hosted large refugee populations and provided support to refugees, including employment opportunities, housing and health and education programmes. In that context, delegations noted with appreciation the support of UNHCR in responding to the needs of the refugees, while also observing that appeals for international financial assistance were not fully met.

11. The view was expressed that equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing and the creation of an overall global environment that was conducive to addressing the root causes of displacement and achieving durable solutions for refugees were extremely important. It was recalled that, in its resolution 73/151, the General Assembly had mandated the measurement of the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees. A delegation opined that the path to addressing the long-standing concern of refugee-hosting countries remained insufficient and emphasized that the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees needed to be an integral part of UNHCR advocacy efforts with donors and partners.

12. A delegation opined that voluntary returns and repatriation were the preferred solution and that durable solutions were required for creating conditions conducive to returns. The view was expressed that UNHCR should enhance its advocacy efforts to encourage States capable of doing so to expand resettlement opportunities for refugees, while ensuring that resettlement programmes were an international responsibility and that they were not provided at the cost of regular migration pathways for nationals of refugee-hosting countries.

13. Several delegations emphasized the importance of durable solutions for displaced populations. In that regard, the increase in resettlement activities and operations was noted and welcomed, including the provision of housing, employment, access to health care, education and social protection, which required multi-stakeholder engagement. A delegation underscored the importance of the engagement of UNHCR with other United Nations agencies and development partners to promote durable solutions in the broader context of the development agenda. Several delegations called for increased engagement by UNHCR with international donors to address financing gaps in responding to humanitarian crises.

14. It was opined that a study on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on protection and assistance efforts was important and that it would help to identify and address some of the root causes.

15. Under the strategy and external factors, and in respect of paragraph 25.3, a delegation noted that the strategy did not include a reference to resettlement and to voluntary repatriation of refugees, which the delegation noted were equally important factors of durable solutions.

16. With respect to paragraph 25.3 (d), several delegations noted with appreciation the reference to follow-up activities regarding the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023 and expressed the view that support from UNHCR in terms of pledge accountability and monitoring was important for ensuring that such commitments would result in a tangible impact and would further the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees.

17. With respect to paragraph 25.5 (a), a delegation welcomed further information on the statement that the work was expected to result in significant advances in the response to refugee situations through more predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

18. With regard to paragraph 25.8 on inter-agency coordination and liaison, a delegation expressed its appreciation for the inclusion of the reference to the UNHCR Institutional Plan on Solutions to Internal Displacement and opined that it offered useful direction for future engagement on the issue. In that regard, a question was raised on whether the expected impact of that initiative could be enhanced by situating UNHCR priorities and intentions for internally displaced persons within the findings of the recent independent review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee response to internal displacement.

19. With regard to paragraph 25.9 on integration of a gender perspective, the view was expressed that it was important to see ongoing commitments to strengthening activities on preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Delegations expressed their support for the commitment of UNHCR to including a gender perspective and disability inclusion framework to mitigate the needs of the most vulnerable, and some delegations welcomed the planned evaluation in 2025 on prevention of and response to gender-based violence. Clarification was sought on how UNHCR would mainstream a victim/survivor-centred approach in the context of the planned evaluation for 2025, and another question was raised on whether UNHCR had considered how to empower and further the important work of local refugee, women-led organizations, in particular in addressing gender-based violence in displacement contexts.

20. Another delegation noted the reference to psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence, and further clarification was sought on the type of psychosocial support services offered and if mental health services was part of those services provided to survivors. Clarification was also sought on whether psychosocial support services were offered to all persons of interest to UNHCR or only in relation to cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

21. With respect to the programme performance in 2023: increased commitment to respond to humanitarian crises, a delegation noted the significant increase in 2023 in the number of pledges to support refugees and their host communities, from 231 in 2021 and 58 in 2022, to 1,725 in 2023. It was noted that a single event in 2023, the Global Refugee Forum, accounted for over 1,600 pledges being made, and clarification was sought on whether the 1,600 pledges were real pledges. Clarification was also sought on whether UNHCR had considered if the Global Refugee Forum could be held more regularly, given its success.

22. With respect to planned result 2: enhanced inclusion of displaced people through digital cash payments, a delegation made reference to paragraph 25.18, expressed its appreciation that the planned performance target for 2023 regarding the percentage of displaced people receiving cash assistance through their own bank or mobile money accounts had been exceeded and welcomed the increased ambition for the coming years. In that regard, the delegation expressed the view that cash-based assistance was a key enabler of refugee self-sufficiency and economic inclusion.

23. With respect to planned result 3: increased prevalence of national and local partners in refugee response plans globally, a delegation referred to paragraph 25.21 and encouraged UNHCR to engage with a wide range of local, national and international operational partners. Clarification on how UNHCR planned to expand the number of community-based and local organizations participating in regional refugee response plans was sought.

24. With respect to the deliverables contained in table 25.1, a delegation requested further information regarding deliverable 20 relating to publications on a range of protection-related themes planned for 2024 and 2025. Another delegation sought clarification on deliverable 23, relating to humanitarian assistance missions

undertaken by the UNHCR senior executive team, and specifically on the reasons why the figures ranged from 143 missions in 2023, to 75 in 2024 and 130 in 2025.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

25. **The Committee recommended that the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly, in line with Assembly resolution [78/244](#), consider the programme plan for programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for 2025 under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning” at the seventy-ninth session of the Assembly.**

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