



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 765th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 14 October 2024, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Stasch ..... (Germany)

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Agenda item 3: High-level segment on statelessness and general debate (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 3: High-level segment on statelessness and general debate** *(continued)*

1. **Ms. Mboukou** (Congo), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that, given the deplorable humanitarian situation in Africa and around the world, it was essential to recall collective international commitments to protect forcibly displaced persons. In the Sudan, the situation was critical, with approximately 11 million persons displaced in 18 months, yet the regional response plan remained seriously underfunded. She called on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), donors and other development partners to provide greater support, urgent humanitarian aid and medium- and long-term development assistance.
2. International legal standards and the Global Compact on Refugees were critical, since solutions to displacement remained out of reach in many regions, particularly in Africa, where the majority of refugees and displaced persons sought protection in countries with limited resources. All States must reaffirm their commitment to those international standards and ensure respect for them, without exception.
3. African States had mobilized to welcome refugees, despite difficulties. To ensure the sustainability of those efforts and share the burden, the international community must respond in a spirit of equality and solidarity, particularly with regard to financing and resettlement. The Global Refugee Forum, held in 2023, had highlighted the importance of partnerships and the Group wished to highlight the pledges made during the Forum and the need to move from words to action, in particular by strengthening asylum systems and supporting the infrastructure that served refugees and host communities.
4. Africa had always had to cope with movements of refugees and migrants, putting asylum systems under immense pressure. She thus called on States to remember their fundamental obligation to protect persons fleeing persecution. Asylum systems must be just, fair and effective, and able to distinguish between the different situations of persons on the move, while ensuring respect for the rights of each individual, including access to education and healthcare. The Group supported the participation of refugees in decision-making, which would ensure that proposed solutions met refugees' actual needs. The Group remained committed to resettlement as one of the most effective means of providing protection for refugees and called for a significant increase in resettlement in States in other regions of the world and for improved access to safe and regulated complementary pathways.
5. Since the launch of the I Belong campaign to end statelessness, several African countries had taken measures to tackle the issue. Statelessness remained a major challenge in the region, however, and the Group therefore welcomed the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and encouraged the acceleration of efforts to provide legal identity for all, in keeping with target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Immediate and collective action was needed to tackle refugee flows, displacement and statelessness. The African States stood ready to play their part, bolstered by increased international support and greater solidarity.
6. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that he appreciated the recent visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to his region. As the international community continued to commemorate World Humanitarian Day, he expressed his condolences to humanitarian workers who were victims of violence and whose numbers continued to rise in Gaza, Lebanon and the Sudan. The normalization of violence against humanitarian workers and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of such violence were causes of concern.
7. One year on from the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, violations by the occupying force continued, together with the recent attack against the sovereignty of Lebanon, in defiance of international law and United Nations resolutions. Threats made against the Secretary-General and heads of United Nations organizations, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) endangered the rules-based international order and the credibility of international parties that had remained silent in the face of those crimes.

8. Lebanon hosted the largest number of refugees per capita and per square kilometre in the world, and had recently experienced the internal displacement of approximately 1.2 million persons. It must not be forgotten that those figures represented untold human suffering. The mandate of UNRWA, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), was inviolable. Continued Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and the West Bank was an affront to the international community. The Group had long warned against hidden agendas that sought to drag the entire region into war. The international community must exert the necessary pressure on the occupying Power: he called for an immediate ceasefire in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Lebanon, urgently allowing in humanitarian aid and the lifting of the unjust siege.

9. The international community must respond effectively to the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan, which had forcibly displaced some 11 million persons, nearly 3 million of whom had fled to neighbouring countries. Funding for humanitarian response plans must be expedited and development processes supported to improve infrastructure for host communities. Efforts were needed to meet the urgent needs of internally displaced persons in Lebanon and of those who had fled Lebanon for the Syrian Arab Republic. Efforts to improve the situation in the Sudan, Yemen and Libya must be intensified.

10. Noting the fall in funding levels and the reduced budget for UNHCR for 2025, he called for support to help the Office respond to continuing crises. The international community should respect the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities and avoid the politicization of humanitarian issues and media coverage that did not reflect reality. He repeated the call of the High Commissioner to renew the commitment to pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and expressed appreciation for the support of UNHCR for return processes. A distinction must be made between issues relating to migration and to refugees, which were subject to different legal frameworks. Sustainable and balanced solutions were needed for refugees, including voluntary return and resettlement in third countries. The safe return of refugees was the main and preferred solution, which would involve enhanced cooperation between humanitarian, development and peace actors, with a focus on the root causes of displacement, including climate change.

11. **Ms. Knudsen** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine, said that it was crucial that UNHCR was able to deliver life-saving protection and assistance, given that millions around the world had been forced to flee their homes. Parties to conflicts violated international humanitarian law. Calls for compliance with international humanitarian law and accountability for its violations, with protection for civilians and the facilitation of humanitarian access, must be placed at the heart of collective action.

12. She urged all actors in the Middle East to exercise restraint, prevent further escalation and engage in international diplomatic efforts. All parties must take every precaution to avoid harm to civilians, humanitarian workers and facilities, in keeping with their obligations under international humanitarian law. The European Union remained committed to a lasting and sustainable peace, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions on the basis of the two-State solution.

13. She welcomed the commitment of UNHCR to a whole-of-route, protection-oriented and rights-based approach to addressing the challenges of mixed movements. UNHCR must work in close partnership with States and other organizations, particularly the International Organization for Migration (IOM). While the funding gap for UNHCR was a cause of concern, efficiency and prioritization efforts were appreciated. She further appreciated the promotion of inclusion, self-reliance and resilience for displaced persons and host communities. A model centred on host government policies with strong development sector engagement was key to long-term solutions. International financial institutions and development agencies must take a more active role from the outset of displacement crises in supporting host countries and alleviating the burden on emergency actors such as UNHCR.

14. The European Union welcomed the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and enjoyed long-standing collaboration with UNHCR in that area. The European Union supported the provision of protection to forcibly displaced persons globally and remained committed to the

right to seek and enjoy asylum and the provisions of international refugee law, including the principle of non-refoulement. Collective efforts were needed to strengthen asylum systems globally. She welcomed the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and expressed the commitment of the European Union to honouring those pledges.

15. Since the start of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the European Union and its member States had provided temporary protection to more than 4 million persons under a directive that had been extended until March 2026. The European Union and its member States sought to provide safe and legal pathways for protection, including through a newly adopted regulation on Union resettlement and humanitarian admission. Efforts to promote complementary pathways continued and she called on countries to provide resettlement opportunities. The European Union and its member States condemned any attempt to exploit migrants and asylum-seekers for political purposes by orchestrating their flows across the external borders of the European Union.

16. She welcomed the adoption by consensus of the conclusions of the Executive Committee on durable solutions and complementary pathways. She appreciated the efforts of UNHCR to promote an inclusive approach, including through the workplace diversity, equality and inclusion framework.

17. **Ms. Schraner Burgener** (Switzerland), speaking on behalf of the co-hosts and the co-convenors of the Global Refugee Forum – Colombia, France, Japan, Jordan and Uganda – said that the international community’s determination to address the challenges, consequences and root causes of forced displacement had been demonstrated by the more than 2,000 pledges made at the Forum, which reflected collective commitment to equitable responsibility-sharing and a whole-of-society approach. In view of the meeting of high-level officials of the Forum, scheduled for December 2025, she urged all stakeholders to strengthen their efforts for refugee protection, inclusion and solutions in three areas: sustaining and upscaling momentum to implement individual and multi-stakeholder pledges; delivering on pledge matching to support inclusive policy commitments by host countries and as a focus of discussions in advance of the meeting of high-level officials; and investing in solutions such as resettlement, complementary pathways and voluntary return, and peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Inclusion in national systems and accelerated efforts to leverage the humanitarian-development-peace nexus were also needed. Every State, stakeholder and partner had a role to play in realizing the ambitions of the Global Compact on Refugees.

18. **Mr. Shabani Lukoo** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, while multiple and diverse crises were occurring around the world, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained difficult, with armed conflict leading to mass forced displacement within and outside the country, bringing the total to some 7.3 million internally displaced persons. Displacement was often accompanied by the rape of women and girls, food insecurity, lack of access to education and the loss of life. The international community must therefore make every effort to tackle the internal and external causes of the crises, particularly the proliferation of armed groups supported by certain neighbouring countries driven by the desire to plunder the country’s abundant natural and mineral resources. The long-standing humanitarian crisis must be brought to an end.

19. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was committed to receiving voluntary returnees in security and dignity, as discussed at the technical tripartite meetings with the Government of Rwanda that had been facilitated by UNHCR. He called on the international community to support return efforts for refugees through reintegration initiatives. In terms of the repatriation of refugees from the Central African Republic, he expressed support for the Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform. He called for greater attention to the problems of the more than half a million refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the need to support host communities.

20. His Government was committed to honouring the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in accordance with a road map that would be progressively rolled out. Progress on tackling statelessness included the adoption of a national action plan and regional road maps, and a parliamentary road map for the implementation of international commitments. His Government’s goals for 2024 were to accede to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, launch the

ratification process for the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa, and complete the reform of civil status.

21. **Mr. Traore** (Burkina Faso) said that the statement by the High Commissioner was welcome, in particular his emphasis on the issue of statelessness and his call for all stakeholders to take action for its eradication. The I Belong campaign had been a turning point in the struggle against statelessness and his country had participated in the related international forums. Since 2019, extensive legal and institutional reforms had been undertaken in Burkina Faso and the ongoing review of the Personal and Family Code would take into account the eradication of statelessness. The pledges made by his Government at the Global Refugee Forum were intended to improve the legal framework for the management of refugees and stateless and internally displaced persons, and to boost access to civil status certificates and identity documents for refugees and internally displaced persons. Those efforts had led to the establishment of civil status offices in health centres and the training of community focal points on birth registration and nationality procedures. Given the risk of statelessness for certain internally displaced persons, efforts had been made to return them to liberated areas.

22. Statelessness was aggravated by a range of phenomena, such as terrorism and climate change, and was clearly linked to the self-serving and monopolistic attitude of certain States and actors. His Government was developing a new action plan to tackle statelessness, had adopted the revised Act on the Status of Refugees and had introduced a digital system for birth registration and civil status certificates. Those initiatives had been made possible through international solidarity and he therefore insisted on the central role of the United Nations system, and UNHCR in particular, in tackling statelessness, noting the commitment and efforts of UNHCR in Burkina Faso. The elimination of statelessness was possible, through solidarity, responsibility-sharing and sustainable peace, security and development.

23. **Ms. Schraner Burgener** (Switzerland) said that the geopolitical situation and its implications for the work of UNHCR was of growing concern, particularly as the conflict in Gaza extended into Lebanon, the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan worsened and the prospect of peace in Ukraine remained uncertain. As the depository of the Geneva Conventions and the present holder of the presidency of the Security Council, her Government was committed to the protection of humanitarian workers in conflict zones, in keeping with Security Council resolution 2730 (2024). She expressed her condolences following the deaths of two UNHCR workers in Lebanon, which had demonstrated once more the dangers faced by humanitarian workers.

24. Her Government had been honoured to co-host, together with UNHCR, the Global Refugee Forum. The momentum generated by the Forum must be maintained until the following one, to be held in 2027. She looked forward to continued discussions on ways to strengthen durable solutions. The integration of displaced persons into host societies and economies was crucial for many reasons. A more sustainable approach must be taken in order to reduce refugees' dependence on humanitarian aid. In that respect, Switzerland welcomed the outcomes of the round table on sustainable programming recently held in Berlin, and it stressed the need to work closely with humanitarian, development and peace actors and to put forcibly displaced persons and host communities at the centre of efforts.

25. As third-country resettlement was a durable solution that reduced vulnerability while also providing support to first host countries receiving a particularly large number of refugees, Switzerland had decided to make an additional contribution of 1 million Swiss francs to support UNHCR resettlement programmes in Lebanon and Türkiye.

26. Switzerland welcomed the Office's efforts to address statelessness among refugees. In line with the commitments made at the Summit of the Future, held in September 2024, more must be done to both protect refugees and prevent the situations that caused them to flee. Inclusive governance would lead to fairer and more resilient societies. Because peace was a precondition for the success of such efforts, Switzerland would continue to work for peace through international cooperation, advocacy, mediation and its good offices.

27. **Ms. Youth** (United States of America) said that the scale and the complexity of humanitarian and refugee needs were staggering, and stretched humanitarian resources must

be efficiently channelled to where they were needed most. To meet the needs, the United States was providing record levels of humanitarian funding and enhancing its coordination with its partners. In fiscal year 2024, it had provided more than \$16 billion in humanitarian assistance to fund, for example, refugee resettlement, overseas assistance and support for vulnerable migrants and refugees around the world. In order to meet the unprecedented challenges, other donors must also step up and contribute more.

28. A transformation was needed in how crises were addressed. The United States Secretary of State had convened a side event at the current session of the General Assembly to highlight the urgent need for better coordination and more strategic investments. The event had brought together senior government officials and representatives of development banks, the private sector, humanitarian and development agencies, foundations and civil society and had served as a platform where the voices of displaced people themselves could be heard.

29. Solutions must be found that allowed refugees to lead their lives in freedom and safety and with dignity. At the Global Refugee Forum, the United States had highlighted the need for a broad coalition involving more than just traditional humanitarian donors and organizations. The United States had developed innovative tools under its whole-of-government approach. For example, the United States International Development Finance Corporation was directly supporting refugees in Uganda through a new programme that used loan portfolio guarantees provided through a local bank to improve refugees' and host communities' access to credit.

30. As the Chair and founding member of the Resettlement Diplomacy Network, the United States was committed to the continued strengthening of the global resettlement infrastructure. There was compelling evidence that inclusive policies expedited the integration and economic independence of refugees. According to a recent study, between 2005 and 2019, refugees contributed some \$124 billion more to the United States economy than was spent on them by the United States Government. In 2024, the United States had once more been a leader in refugee resettlement, welcoming more than 100,000 refugees – the highest annual figure in three decades.

31. The United States renewed its call for the protection of humanitarian workers. They should never be a target. The United States appreciated the principled and inclusive stance taken by the Office on age, gender and diversity, including with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity, in promoting and maintaining a diverse workforce. The United States applauded the Office's focus on statelessness. It also supported the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and looked forward to serving on its Advisory Committee.

32. **Ms. Zugay** (United States of America) said that, as a former refugee and someone who had been stateless before gaining full rights through United States citizenship, she understood the profound loss of basic human rights and isolation that not having a nationality entailed. Solutions rooted in the technical expertise and lived experience of displaced people could unlock new paths to a more effective, innovative and durable humanitarian protection landscape. Meaningful change required bold, forward-looking leadership and the involvement of Governments, civil society and the private sector.

33. **Mr. Hassan** (Djibouti) said that the world was going through a perilous period characterized by disorder, uncertainty and flagrant violations of international humanitarian law. There was a proliferation of increasingly violent conflicts, and Africa had not been spared. In several East African countries, the effects of both internal conflicts and climate change were forcing people of all ages to leave their homes in search of protection.

34. Djibouti, a haven of peace, was unfortunately located at the crossroads of several migration routes. Flows of displaced persons passed through the waters of the Bab al-Mandab, and the country had to face, alone, the tragedies that resulted from the wrecks of makeshift vessels transporting men, women and children. Following the most recent such wreck, the Government and IOM had been able to save only 8 of the 205 people who had been on board. One of those saved had been a 4-month-old child. The staggering number of refugees in Djibouti equalled 3 per cent of the country's population, and the annual number of people involved in the swelling population movements, which included migrants in vulnerable situations in need of international protection who did not have the status of a refugee, was estimated to equal one fourth of the country's population.

35. In close cooperation with its partners, particularly UNHCR, Djibouti worked ceaselessly to support the autonomy and integration of refugees. However, to be effective, such efforts required support from development actors and the mobilization of significant resources to meet pressing infrastructure needs in areas such as energy, water supply, transportation, housing, education and healthcare, and reduce the burden on host communities.

36. While Djibouti was grateful for the consistent bilateral and multilateral support already provided, it was crucial that the international community should invest more in addressing the root causes of forced displacement in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development region by supporting regional cooperation for the promotion of peace and security. Djibouti, which held the chairship of the Authority, stood ready to work with UNHCR to move towards that goal.

37. **Mr. Schreiber** (South Africa) said that the sound of bombs and gunfire were growing louder across the globe and, like the sound of thunder, were a warning of the scale of approaching humanitarian emergencies. The storms of armed conflict and the misrule that bred poverty and hunger were converging with the physical storms driven by a changing climate to displace millions of people at an exponential pace. For that reason, South Africa believed in a rules-based multilateral system and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The efforts of the international community to tackle the root causes of displacement should focus on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

38. In South Africa, a profound political shift towards cooperation had recently resulted in the formation of a Government of national unity, with diverse political forces uniting around a shared respect for the country's rules-based internal order and its human rights-based Constitution. To address the root causes of global displacement, diverse peoples must unite around shared values and in pursuit of common solutions at a global level. The international community should invest more in conflict prevention and do more to embed good governance as a driver of economic and social development.

39. South Africa would appreciate further engagement under a route-based approach applied specifically to the Southern African region. The success of such an approach would depend on greater investment in the bolstering of asylum systems in Africa and the engagement of the countries along the routes.

40. As part of its contribution to the I Belong campaign, his Government had rolled out over 200 mobile offices for late birth registrations and deepened cooperation with hospitals on the recording of births. South Africa was setting clear new performance targets to improve its adjudication processes for asylum applications, and it looked forward to engaging with more partners for technical and financial assistance.

41. As South Africa celebrated its thirtieth year of democracy, it gratefully acknowledged the support that the family of nations had provided in the country's democratic journey. Out of respect for lessons from its own history, South Africa urged members of the Executive Committee to renew their commitment to the institutions of a rules-based global order.

42. **Mr. Ng'oma** (Malawi) said that displacement was becoming increasingly complex, with refugees and migrants often moving side by side along transnational routes. Malawi hosted a large number of refugees and asylum-seekers – some 55,000 – and faced numerous challenges as a result. It called for equitable responsibility- and burden-sharing in addressing those challenges.

43. An increasing number of transnational crimes were being perpetrated by migrants claiming to seek international protection, which posed a threat to national security and had necessitated a re-evaluation of the country's procedures, policies and laws on reception and admission. Illegal migration had led to camp overcrowding and placed a strain on the supply of goods and services. Diminishing funding was having an impact on the country's refugee operations. A commitment to sustainable support was needed.

44. Over the previous year, his Government had been working to improve the country's legal and policy framework for forcibly displaced persons. In order to ease the congestion in the Dzaleka refugee camp and provide economic opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers, the Government had acquired 445 hectares of land in Chitipa District and

drawn up plans for a settlement site there. Malawi called on UNHCR and all its partners to provide support for the timely development of the site.

45. There was a need to expand third-country solutions, create the conditions for a safe and dignified return to countries of origin and increase the number of beneficiaries of durable solutions and complementary pathways. As the prospect of resettlement was pulling new asylum-seekers into the country, there was also a need to raise awareness of the relevant procedures so as to reduce misconceptions and fraud-related risks. Malawi wished to make a plea for an increase in resettlement quotas.

46. In 2024, 98 persons had been voluntarily repatriated from Malawi, in collaboration with UNHCR, with the most recent cohort having departed for Rwanda on 18 September. Malawi wished to thank the Governments of Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia for their support in those efforts and hoped that that support would continue. He was pleased to report that Malawi had recently resumed issuing electronic Convention travel documents to eligible refugees.

47. Malawi had included refugees in its national financial inclusion strategy, national birth registration programmes and the national education system, as such inclusion would empower them to contribute to local communities and economies until they were able to return home. To sustain those programmes, commitment and resources were required.

48. In the decade since the launch of the I Belong campaign, Malawi had conducted a study on statelessness in the country, developed a national plan of action on statelessness and prepared standard operating procedures for the registration of births of vulnerable children. Plans were under way to register and issue birth certificates to all children under 16. Efforts were made to establish applicants' nationality by the Refugee Status Determination Committee. Malawi wished to reaffirm its commitment to implementing the conventions relating to international protection for forcibly displaced persons and sought to collaborate further with UNHCR and other partners.

49. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that UNHCR shared the concerns expressed by the Group of Arab States regarding a further expansion of the conflict in Lebanon and the crisis in the Sudan and welcomed the points raised by the Group regarding the importance of financial support for UNHCR. He wished to express the Office's appreciation for the multiple forms of support provided by the European Union and welcomed the mention in its statement of the route-based approach, a key element of the new pact on migration and asylum. It was important to ensure the effective implementation of that important European Union instrument. He agreed with the European Union that it was important for UNHCR and IOM to cooperate given the increasingly mixed nature of multi-country population movements. The two bodies coordinated their actions whenever appropriate. He wished to thank the Group of African States for the reminder that many of the conflicts taking place in Africa, including those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sahel and the Sudan, to name just a few, were either neglected or had been forgotten by the international community. That neglect extended to the underfunded humanitarian response. He welcomed the mention in the Group's statement of the importance of involving refugees in the development of programmes that affected them.

50. He welcomed the very specific commitments regarding statelessness made by Burkina Faso and its commitment to finding solutions to the significant problems that it faced with respect to internal displacement. UNHCR would work alongside Burkina Faso to pursue those solutions. He appreciated the reminder from the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the gravity of the crisis in the eastern part of that country and agreed that that crisis could not be resolved unless the region worked towards peace. He was pleased that UNHCR had been able to make a modest contribution to that effort through its tripartite agreement with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

51. Djibouti, a small country, hosted a large number of refugees fleeing neighbouring countries in crisis. He supported its call for increased involvement by development agencies and welcomed its offer to continue supporting efforts to find solutions for refugees in the Horn of Africa under its chairship of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. He welcomed the efforts being made by Malawi. It was important to expedite the measures to ease congestion in the Dzaleka refugee camp, with help from donors and international



organizations. He welcomed the mention of inclusion in the statement by Malawi and heard its appeal that domestic efforts to promote inclusion should be matched by international solutions, such as voluntary repatriation and resettlement. South Africa had made an extraordinarily important statement, in which a country that had itself benefited from international solidarity in its own efforts to overcome racism and violence and transition to democracy expressed its commitment to human rights and justice. He welcomed the mention of the route-based approach and its application to an area outside Europe and North America.

52. He wished to reiterate the Office's gratitude and his own to the United States of America for the exceptional financial contribution it had once again made to UNHCR in 2024. He welcomed the initiative of the Secretary of State, which was in line with the Office's own efforts to make aid to refugees more sustainable. He wished to thank the United States for the incredible support that it provided with respect to resettlement. UNHCR welcomed the role played by Switzerland at the Security Council as a voice speaking out for populations affected by conflict and about the importance of humanitarian issues. He wished to thank Switzerland for the contribution that it had announced to support resettlement. With respect to the statement made by Switzerland on behalf of the co-hosts and co-convenors of the Global Refugee Forum, he wished to note that the some 2,000 pledges made at the Forum needed to be honoured and work being done to implement pledges needed to be accelerated. It must be ensured that the pledges had an impact on the capacity of host countries to host refugees.

53. **Mr. Sazakov** (Turkmenistan) said that Turkmenistan had successfully completed its campaign to completely eliminate statelessness on 20 September 2024, in accordance with the sustainable development principle of ensuring that no one was left behind. Citizenship and residence permits had been granted to all stateless persons, including those who had been convicted of criminal offences to whom the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons did not apply, thereby showing great tolerance on the part of the Government. Turkmenistan had been the first country in the Central Asian region to become a party to the Convention and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and it complied with all its international obligations to eradicate statelessness. The country would soon host a regional conference on combating statelessness in November, which would promote international dialogue on potential solutions.

54. **Mr. Murasira** (Rwanda) said that Rwanda hosted more than 135,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As part of the comprehensive refugee response framework and Global Compact on Refugees, Rwanda had stepped up policies and programmes to enhance the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees. The Government, in cooperation with UNHCR and other partners, had mobilized funds to support the economic development of refugee and host communities. Over the previous five years, close to \$30 million had been allocated to improve the livelihood of refugees.

55. Rwanda continued to uphold the commitments it had made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019 and 2023 to include refugees in the national education and healthcare systems, promote their economic empowerment and ensure access to legal documentation. Refugees were free to travel and conduct business, and they were provided with business and job opportunities. Rwanda was exploring the possibility of moving refugees from camps into integrated settlements. He called on UNHCR and development partners to ensure the disbursement of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and to enhance peace processes, step up conflict resolution efforts and expand voluntary repatriation schemes to ensure that refugees were able to return to their countries of origin in a safe and dignified manner.

56. **Mr. Sayrin Amurgail** (Sudan) said that the war waged by the rebel militias and their State sponsors against the Sudan had given rise to the worst humanitarian catastrophe and the largest displacement crisis in the world. More than 10 million people, mostly women and children, had left their homes, and a further 2 million had crossed the border into neighbouring countries. He urged all States to respect the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and other international human rights instruments to prevent discrimination against Sudanese refugees and preserve their dignity.

57. Finding a durable solution for refugees and displaced persons, such as voluntary return, was a priority for the Sudan. The country aimed to integrate refugees into the economy

and society to make them self-reliant and create the conditions necessary for peaceful co-existence between refugees and the host population. A law had been passed to grant nationality to refugees and safeguard against statelessness. All refugees in the Sudan had the right to retain their identity and refugee status, and were afforded the necessary protection.

58. He renewed his call for the international community and donors to respond to the humanitarian situation in the Sudan. The militia frequently blocked humanitarian aid in regions such as Darfur, which was under siege, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and various Security Council resolutions, and a large number of refugees suffered from malnutrition as a result. Unfortunately, the failure of the United Nations to devise a financial aid plan had exacerbated the situation for many refugees and internally displaced persons. Medium- and long-term support was needed to meet the needs of host societies in accordance with the principle of burden-sharing, and pressure should be placed on the militia to respect international humanitarian law and prevent their sponsors from supplying arms.

59. **Mr. Onek** (Uganda) said that, since the previous session of the Executive Committee in October 2023, the number of refugees hosted by Uganda had increased by 160,000, of whom a significant proportion had come from the Sudan. Almost 80 per cent of the 1.7 million refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda were women and children, who lived in settlements on land allocated by the Government. While Uganda hosted the largest number of refugees on the African continent, its refugee response remained chronically underfunded, which placed tremendous pressure on government resources and called into question the principle of equitable international burden- and responsibility-sharing, as established in the Global Compact on Refugees.

60. Ten months after the recent Global Refugee Forum, the Government was still waiting for the fulfilment of the pledges made, which was the yardstick by which the success of the second Forum would be measured. Uganda had begun implementing its policy commitments with a specific focus on action to combat climate change and championed global solutions that sought to address the root causes of displacement. Financial support from its partners was essential to ensure the effectiveness of its efforts.

61. Consultations with relevant stakeholders was a vital part of sustainable programming. Ongoing support should be provided to refugees to ease the burden on host countries in line with the principle of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. In view of the increasing number of refugees worldwide, collective action was required to address the growing humanitarian crisis, tackle the root causes of displacement, support durable solutions for refugees, and provide timely, predictable and sustainable funding.

62. **Ms. Mboukou** (Congo) said that the Congo was hosting almost 70,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, most of whom came from the Central African Republic. Thanks to its close collaboration with UNHCR, the Government guaranteed all such persons protection and assistance in accordance with the relevant international instruments. In October 2023, the Government had granted prima facie recognition of refugee status to 14,000 nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

63. The significant influx of refugees posed a major challenge in terms of protection and assistance, particularly at a time when the country faced a difficult economic and financial situation. The Government was concerned by the gradual reduction in the yearly UNHCR budget allocation for operations in the Congo and the decrease in the number of UNHCR staff, which jeopardized the Government's efforts to ensure the safety of and to provide decent living conditions for refugees and asylum-seekers.

64. The Congo was committed to finding durable solutions with the support of UNHCR, particularly through voluntary repatriation and return to third countries. A campaign had been launched to highlight the opportunities offered by the Congo to facilitate the integration of refugees into the country's economic fabric and allow them to play a role in the supply of goods and services. Pursuant to Act No. 41 of 29 September 2021, establishing the right to asylum and refugee status, a campaign had been organized to raise awareness among stakeholders in the public and private sectors of issues related to international protection, with emphasis on the country's international commitments and responsibilities. The

Government sought the continued support of UNHCR in 2025 to train 10,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in a wide range of professions to allow them to compete in the labour market.

65. In 2023, the Congo had become party to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, issued more than 115,000 birth certificates, and established a committee to eradicate statelessness. The Government was conducting campaigns to raise awareness among both nationals and foreigners on the prevention of statelessness, and mobile courts had been set up to help provide access to birth certificates. However, the Congo faced challenges with the operationalization of the committee and the collection of qualitative data on the stateless population.

66. **Mr. Lephema** (Lesotho) said that stateless persons were disproportionately affected by global challenges such as geopolitical tensions, increased migration flows, climate change and economic disruption. He wished to signal his Government's interest in joining the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and to reaffirm its commitment eradicating statelessness.

67. The Government was in the process of enacting an immigration and citizenship bill that would repeal the Aliens Control Act 1966 and establish safeguards against statelessness at birth by granting nationality to children born or found in the country who would otherwise be stateless. Lesotho had adopted a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to dealing with the issue, and it worked with various partners, including UNHCR, the Transformation Resource Centre, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Skillshare Lesotho to identify and protect stateless persons. The Department of National Identity and Civil Registration had taken robust steps to ensure that legal identity was provided to all, in line with the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and the commitment to leave no one behind.

68. The Government was undertaking a qualitative study to find durable solutions and better understand the situation of groups and individuals at risk of statelessness, and had established mobile offices to register citizens, migrants and refugees. Given the challenges related to the collection of data on statelessness, proper collaboration and information-sharing among the relevant stakeholders would greatly assist the Government with the implementation of its migration agenda. Lesotho would appreciate the support of the international community in conducting a study that would inform the development of evidence-based policies to tackle irregular migration, raise awareness of statelessness and promote the inclusion of migrants. It was imperative for State and non-State actors to establish a framework for addressing the challenges faced by stateless persons and to tackle exclusionary forms of citizenship.

69. **Mr. Quartey** (Ghana) said that the principle underpinning refugee management in Ghana was to include refugees in the national agenda, with a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Refugees had the same access to work, health services and education as Ghanaian nationals, and largely the same access to social services. Ghana had been a pioneer in social inclusion, with refugees guaranteed access to documentation, including the national identification system, which was critical to reducing the risk of statelessness. The increasingly complex nature of displacement was reflected in northern Ghana and the West African subregion. The sacrifices made by host communities could not be overstated, it was essential for Ghana to be able to continue to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance to persons who required it.

70. The country focused on cultural affinity and human dignity to support asylum-seekers in host communities, including in northern Ghana, despite the scope of that approach and its attendant complexities. His Government acknowledged the interventions of the United Nations and other development actors in the northern part of the country, but more must be done to support social structures in the affected areas to build the resilience of host communities and strengthen partnerships. To manage the asylum situation in northern Ghana, the Government had adopted an approach aligned with the UNHCR policy on alternatives to camps, and called for the Office's continuous support and advocacy through other United Nations bodies, developmental actors, the private sector and donors; further support for host communities would make it possible to promote the inclusion of refugees.

71. In view of the unpredictability of humanitarian funding, the Government, with renewed support from the UNHCR representative in Ghana, was raising awareness among local private sector actors on the needs of refugees and the benefits of contributing to their well-being. Ghana continued to focus on solutions to refugee situations and would work with UNHCR to address protracted caseloads. It was committed to ensuring that suitable durable solutions were made available. Preparations were under way for the High Commissioner's anticipated visit to Ghana.

72. **Mr. Sanyang** (Observer for the Gambia) said that global cooperation on refugee protection and humanitarian assistance was more essential than ever as the world faced unprecedented levels of forced displacement. Despite its limited resources, the Gambia remained steadfast in its commitment to providing refuge to those fleeing conflict, persecution and natural disaster, in line with its long tradition of hospitality and the principles of humanitarian practice and solidarity.

73. Through its healthcare, education and social services, the country was attempting to support the more than 4,200 refugees it had welcomed from 21 countries. The global economic downturn and the impact of climate change had further complicated its ability to extend protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees; international solidarity and burden-sharing were therefore crucial. Increased support from the international community for the hosting of refugees would be welcome, particularly in the Gambia where resources were often very limited.

74. The Gambia was committed to addressing the root cause of displacement, missing persons and irregular migration through active engagement with efforts to resolve the conflicts forcing people to flee their homes. Its involvement in peacekeeping missions of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States was a testament to its commitment to ensuring stability in the subregion. More robust action on climate change, including finance mechanisms in support of developing countries, was required.

75. There was an urgent need for more durable solutions for refugees. The Gambia was working closely with UNHCR on resettlement, voluntary repatriation and local integration programmes. Being a stateless person or a refugee was not a choice. Member States must work together to create opportunities for refugees in education, vocational training and employment to enable them to rebuild their lives and contribute to their host communities.

76. **Ms. Teny** (Observer for South Sudan) said that South Sudan was appreciative of the visit made by the High Commissioner to mark World Refugee Day; he had spent time at the refugee settlement in Jamjang, which was now at risk of flooding and likely to be declared a disaster area, and the Renk transit centre for Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees forced to leave the Sudan owing to the ongoing conflict. The visit had highlighted the challenges confronted by South Sudan in the face of severe cuts to donor funding, the vulnerabilities of refugees, returnees and host communities, and the efforts made by the Government, host communities and international partners.

77. South Sudan continued to maintain an open-door policy, receiving forcefully displaced persons despite severe economic difficulty. The Government was undertaking comprehensive reforms and incorporating international instruments and international protection standards into its national law. The Government had ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, a crucial step in preventing statelessness and ensuring that persons at risk were afforded the rights and protections they deserved.

78. With the funding and assistance of UNHCR and Inkomoko, an organization to support entrepreneurship, South Sudan was issuing digital refugee identity cards and machine-readable Convention travel documents. Government and partners' efforts on capacity-building for law enforcement officials had been launched and a strategy on civil registration was being developed. With the support of UNHCR and the European Union, approximately 15,000 persons had been issued with identity cards. Moreover, in October 2024 the Government and its partners had launched the South Sudan Durable Solutions Strategy and Plan of Action for Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, Returnees and Host Communities. The Strategy was the first of its kind in South Sudan and was intended to provide sustainable improved livelihoods. The views of all stakeholders were integrated into

government efforts through close collaboration with traditional leaders, community-based organizations and civil society. In addition, through partnerships with international organizations and the private sector, the Government was creating access to job opportunities, particularly for women, young people and host communities, including agricultural programmes and business opportunities to enhance food security.

79. **Mr. da Silva** (Observer for Guinea-Bissau) said that the issues leading to the flow of refugees, such as climate change and conflict, notably in the Middle East, the Sudan, South Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, posed enormous challenges. Statelessness was incompatible with a civilized world where human rights and dignity were respected; the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness was thus welcome and the good practices that had already been implemented were encouraging. Guinea-Bissau maintained strong working links with UNHCR, which had a representative in Bissau and a focal point for the Global Compact on Refugees.

80. In recent years, the National Commission for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons had contributed to the achievement of important goals in response to regional and humanitarian crises in Africa. Guinea-Bissau had ratified and incorporated into its national law the international instruments on the status of refugees and stateless persons and implemented a relevant institutional framework. Guinea-Bissau had adopted a range of durable solutions to facilitate voluntary repatriation, as it had done with persons returning to Sierra Leone and Liberia. There was support for a programme on the effective integration of long-term refugees in Guinea-Bissau, including a simplified naturalization process from which over 10,000 refugees could benefit, the establishment of a sustainable land management programme in host communities and the adoption of an institutional capacity-building programme.

81. Overall, the situation of refugees and displaced persons in the country was under control. The Government continued to implement institutional reforms and mechanisms, expand its commitments and develop a national road map and policies. However, sensitive issues remained, such as the management of forced internal displacement in the island village of Djobel, where a naturalization process was ongoing. He called on the international community for greater engagement to improve the lives of refugees and eradicate statelessness.

82. **Ms. Dlamini** (Observer for Eswatini) said that the Government was committed to creating an enabling environment for those under its care by opening its borders to people fleeing conflicts, violence and persecution. However, that commitment hinged on the implementation of an effective and efficient asylum system, which entailed orderly and well-managed procedures for processing and welcoming refugees and asylum-seekers, with due recognition of their rights and dignity. Such measures helped to guarantee an environment where refugees could gain access to work and enjoy freedom of movement to promote their livelihoods.

83. The country was grateful for the cooperation of its local, regional and international partners, which helped the Government to fulfil its pledges on refugee protection and the prevention and eradication of statelessness. UNHCR and its partners continued to work tirelessly, despite increasing financial constraints worldwide. Her Government was grateful to those that had pledged support for its project to promote economic inclusion.

84. Significant progress had been made in renovating the refugee settlement; many refugees had expressed their willingness to relocate there when possible. In March 2024, cabinet ministers and senior government officials had conducted a high-level visit to the settlement in collaboration with UNHCR, attended by ambassadors from five countries. The assignment by UNHCR of a full-time senior officer to fast track the project was appreciated.

85. The Government had been implementing durable solutions, such as the recent naturalization of 17 refugee families, the resettlement of refugees in countries such as Germany and the United States of America, and the voluntary repatriation of several families to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. Moreover, gender discrimination in the registration of children born out of wedlock had been addressed under the National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Act of 2023; previously, only mothers had been able to

register such children. Eswatini remained committed to the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and the implementation of the I Belong campaign.

86. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he commended Turkmenistan on taking steps to completely eliminate statelessness in the country, as Kyrgyzstan had done several years previously. Its actions set an example for other countries to follow, particularly in the countries of the former Soviet Union where statelessness remained an issue.

87. UNHCR had a long relationship with the Sudan and addressing the displacement caused by the ongoing conflict in the country remained one of the Office's priorities. He had visited the Sudan and neighbouring countries on several occasions and would continue to do so. It was essential for the pathway to political negotiations to be accelerated with the goodwill of all parties; humanitarian efforts alone would not be sufficient to address the consequences of the conflict. He reiterated his calls for the Sudan to support access to all possible areas of the country, uphold international humanitarian law and support the logistical operations of UNHCR and all other requirements of humanitarian agencies. UNHCR would continue to mobilize resources for the Sudan and displaced people there and in neighbouring countries.

88. Despite not sharing a border with the Sudan, Uganda had taken in thousands of Sudanese refugees, illustrating the scale of refugee flows. The number of refugees taken by Uganda had increased since 2023. He called on States to support Uganda, which continued to implement inclusive policies, and honour the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. He looked forward to making a country visit to Uganda in the near future.

89. Against a backdrop of climate-related and economic challenges and the aftermath of years of conflict, South Sudan had received thousands of refugees from the Sudan; many of the refugees were Sudanese, but others were South Sudanese returnees who had grown up in the Sudan. The challenges presented by such a volume of arrivals called for significant government engagement, which could only be effective with adequate international support. UNHCR remained committed to supporting the people of South Sudan, including those who were in exile or refugees in neighbouring countries.

90. A sustainable model to support refugees and the countries hosting them was the way forward. In that regard, he welcomed the statement made by Rwanda on the need for sustainability in all efforts. The country's move away from refugee camps to integrated settlements, following the example of other countries in the region, was a positive development. UNHCR would count on Rwanda to continue to champion such an approach.

91. The Congo continued to host many refugees from neighbouring countries, most of whom came from the Central African Republic. Regional engagement was essential to alleviating the burden placed on neighbouring countries, including the Congo, by the volume of refugees from the Central African Republic; UNHCR had established a specific regional platform to better support the return and repatriation of refugees to the Central African Republic. With a view to making humanitarian aid more sustainable, UNHCR would continue to engage with development actors to support the Congo in its policies, which had always been very welcoming to refugees and were hampered by the budgetary cuts that were sometimes required.

92. Eswatini, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Lesotho had all welcomed relatively small but still significant numbers of refugees and stateless persons, and had made commendable legislative improvements. UNHCR would continue to provide assistance through a direct presence on the ground or through one of its multi-country offices.

93. Lastly, he appreciated the efforts made by Ghana to champion inclusion. Ghana and other West African countries faced challenges resulting from the outflow of people from Burkina Faso and other countries in the central Sahel region. UNHCR was in contact with development actors, such as the World Bank, to raise awareness of the importance of an early response to refugee flows and provide support.

*The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.*