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Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2026

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 21

International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 13 May 2025, the Committee considered programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme plan for 2026 and programme performance in 2024 (A/80/6 (Sect. 25)).

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed appreciation and support for the work carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide humanitarian assistance and international protection to refugees and forcibly displaced persons and achieve durable solutions. Some delegations acknowledged the crucial role of UNHCR as the main international agency for the protection of refugees and forcibly displaced persons. It was recognized that regional conflicts, economic downturn, climate change and natural disasters were among the multiple factors that perpetuated the grim global refugee situation, in which new displacements outpaced durable solutions. Sustained efforts of the international community in supporting the work of UNHCR were further emphasized by some delegations.

3. A delegation expressed its appreciation for the Office's courageous personnel who worked in areas of heightened risks and conflict zones, and emphasized that their security should be prioritized. In this regard, clarification was sought on the measures taken by UNHCR to ensure the security of its staff.



4. Several delegations noted that, while humanitarian needs continued to increase, the humanitarian system faced significant financial constraints, and concerns were raised regarding the limited resourcing environment. A delegation emphasized the need for other donor countries to contribute more equitably to humanitarian response efforts and for increased burden-sharing and exploring economic opportunities to better serve the displaced populations. The Chair emphasized that matters related to parts of the programme dealing with resources were not within the mandate of the Committee.

5. A number of delegations expressed the view that the persistent issues of protracted displacement and the efficacy of achieving durable solutions necessitated a fundamental rethinking of UNHCR strategies and operations in 2026. The need for UNHCR to prioritize core activities, streamline its operations, reduce duplication and enhance its effectiveness, with a focus on delivering tangible results, was emphasized by some delegations. A delegation requested UNHCR to be transparent in its reports on the number of people whom it could help and those whom it could not as a result of reduced funding.

6. The view was expressed that UNHCR should work to wind down conflicts and afford people an opportunity to return home safely. A delegation expressed its view that refugee protection should abide by the principle of neutrality rather than double standards and politicization, to prevent the refugee issue from interfering in other countries' internal affairs, or becoming a free pass for terrorists who are subject to legal sanctions.

7. A number of delegations noted that their countries hosted and provided support to large refugee populations, which included employment opportunities, housing, and health and education programmes. Other delegations noted their countries' financial contributions to supporting the work of UNHCR. With regard to host countries, the view was expressed that host countries could not be expected to shoulder the responsibility of hosting refugees alone, that there was a need for stronger international cooperation and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing and that the international community had to take concrete, sustained action. A delegation opined that the General Assembly could request UNHCR to include, in future programmes, more information on solutions for reversing the descending trend of UNHCR resources and the negative impacts of unilateral coercive measures. While a delegation expressed the view that the path to addressing the long-standing concern of refugee-hosting countries remained insufficient and needed to be an integral part of UNHCR advocacy efforts with donors and partners, another delegation expressed satisfaction with the heightened efforts of UNHCR to support host countries and its commitment to sending assistance through enhanced partnerships with local partners, regional organizations and refugee-led organizations.

8. A delegation opined that repatriation and reintegration into the country of origin was the most important durable solution for refugees, which should have been reflected more prevalently as a top priority for UNHCR. The delegation expressed the view that, to respond effectively to such a protracted situation, the international community had to prioritize sustainable and development-oriented solutions for the country of origin, which could require support for the reintegration of returnees through predictable multi-year financing, the restoration of infrastructure, and strengthened technical assistance. The delegation emphasized that the implementation of such support should be coordinated and aligned with the rules and regulations of the country.

9. While a number of delegations welcomed the reference made in paragraph 25.3 (b) to the role of the Global Compact on Refugees and to follow-up activities on the pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, another delegation expressed reservations about the Compact, noting that it was not legally binding. The view was

expressed that support from UNHCR in terms of pledge accountability and monitoring was important in ensuring that such commitments would result in a tangible impact. Clarification was sought on how UNHCR was increasing cash assistance to recipients and on progress made on the Digital Gateway.

10. With regard to paragraph 25.3 (c), clarification was sought on the reasons for the use of the term “internationally agreed standards”. A delegation opined that it would have been better to use the term “international law”. With regard to paragraph 25.3 (f), a delegation noted the reference to “enhance the resilience of forcibly displaced persons and their host communities faced with the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, in consultation with national authorities and in cooperation with competent agencies” and expressed the view that it was not under the remit of the UNHCR mandate. The delegation sought further clarification on the reasons for its inclusion in the programme plan.

11. With regard to paragraph 25.7, a number of delegations noted with appreciation the reference made to the Office’s increased support and work with local actors. A delegation opined that engagement with local actors and organizations should serve as an increasing part of the solution, particularly in a challenging resource context. The delegation further welcomed the increasing percentage of local and national operational partners in refugee response plans globally, reflected in figure 25.II under planned result 2 and paragraph 25.20. The delegation sought clarification on whether the targets for 2025 and 2026 could have been more ambitious. Another delegation emphasized that a shift towards sustainable, nationally led responses that aligned humanitarian assistance with the long-term development strategies was critical.

12. With regard to the performance measure for 2024 contained in table 25.1, a delegation applauded UNHCR efforts on the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and noted that more than 560,000 stateless persons had acquired nationality. However, the delegation observed that, notable progress and commitments notwithstanding, millions of people remained stateless, and in that regard sought clarification on the lessons that UNHCR had drawn from its work in this area to address the problem more effectively.

13. With regard to planned result 1: enhanced inclusion of displaced people through digital cash payments, clarification was sought on the objective of providing cash assistance through the refugees’ own bank account and how UNHCR monitored the actual use of cash assistance by refugees to ensure that it contributed meaningfully to protection outcomes and self-reliance.

14. With regard to planned result 3: strengthened protection and access to services for refugees and asylum-seekers, and paragraph 25.22 on the planned scale-up of the Digital Gateway by 2026, clarification was sought on how UNHCR intended to address digital literacy gaps and limited access to devices among vulnerable refugee populations. The delegation noted the anticipated surge in registration reflected in figure 25.III, where the number of refugees with digital accounts was projected to increase more than fivefold by 2026, and sought clarification on whether UNHCR had sufficient capacity to respond to the growing demand. Clarification was also sought on how UNHCR was addressing any challenges, including in the context of the broader reform efforts under the UN80 Initiative.

15. With regard to legislative mandates, a delegation welcomed the inclusion of relevant conventions in the programme plan, such as the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, 1969, and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, 2009.

16. With regard to table 25.2 under Deliverables, a delegation noted that 13 field and technical cooperation projects were undertaken in 2024 and 9 were planned for 2025 and 11 for 2026. The delegation sought clarification on how many projects were undertaken in Central Africa and whether the target for 2026 was too ambitious in the light of the current financial constraints. Clarification was also sought on the impact of recent financial reductions on UNHCR work in Central Africa.

Conclusions and recommendations

17. **The Committee recommended that the plenary or the relevant Main Committee or Main Committees of the General Assembly, in line with Assembly resolution [79/247](#), consider the programme plan for programme 21, International protection, durable solutions and assistance to refugees, of the proposed programme budget for 2026 under the agenda item entitled “Programme planning” at the eightieth session of the Assembly.**
