



# General Assembly

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## Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sixtieth session

### Summary record of the 634th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 1 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Dumont ..... (Argentina)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee** (*continued*)

**(a) International protection** (*continued*) (A/AC.96/1065, A/AC.96/1066, A/AC.96/1073 and A/AC.96/1075)

1. **Mr. Alagbash** (Sudan) recalled that over the last 30 years his country had welcomed many refugees most of whom were in protracted refugee situations. He said that his Government hoped that donor countries would increase their contributions for refugee resettlement and thanked Sweden for having financed the resettlement of many of them. Sudan was amending the Act of 1974 concerning the situation of refugees in order to be able better to meet the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers. In that respect, he asked the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for continued support, as Sudan would be reinforcing its capacities in that field. With regard to refugee protection, his Government had set up, in coordination with the UNHCR Office in Khartoum, a department to study the political dimensions of the issue. The first phase of the refugee registration process, which should allow appropriate strategies to be implemented better to meet refugees' needs, had been completed for refugees living in camps. He called upon UNHCR to help them launch the second phase for urban refugees, which was part of the strategy produced in consultation with UNHCR.

2. **Mr. Jung Jin-Ho** (Republic of Korea) welcomed UNHCR's endeavours to reinforce its operations on statelessness and the importance given to the issue by the new budget structure. That would allow UNHCR to afford greater protection to stateless persons in need of it. One of the root causes of the difficulties faced by stateless persons was the lack of information and the obstacles to assessing their nationality. He also welcomed UNHCR's efforts to provide legal counselling to stateless persons and improve their access to information on legal and financial assistance. At that juncture, it was imperative to identify all the stateless persons worldwide. The political will of States would play a vital role in that undertaking.

3. He welcomed UNHCR's consideration of environmental issues when undertaking protection activities. He noted that the preventive measures to mitigate the environmental impact of humanitarian operations were much more effective than restoration activities carried out after environmental degradation, not only in terms of cost-effectiveness, but also for sustainable humanitarian works. It was therefore important to incorporate an environmental perspective into all protection activities carried out by UNHCR and Governments. Partnerships with other relevant agencies were also very important in that field.

4. **Mr. Souanam** (Algeria) welcomed the fact that UNHCR's Global Needs Assessment initiative had provided a better understanding of the gaps in protection. He expressed his country's full agreement with the need to ensure a coherent approach between international protection, the search for sustainable solutions, development and respect for refugees' dignity. It was important to implement the Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol of 1967, which provided a firm basis for an appropriate response to refugees' needs. Accordingly, his delegation called upon all those States that had not ratified those two instruments to do so. He noted with concern the increase in the number of internally displaced persons due to the upsurge in conflicts in many regions of the world. The African Union's Special Summit in Kampala and the convention due to be adopted there would undoubtedly play a positive role in that respect. He called on UNHCR to continue its support for measures to combat xenophobia in politics and the media of certain countries.

5. Algeria welcomed the High Commissioner's initiative on protracted refugee situations and called for the negotiation process to be expedited so as to adopt a Conclusion on that important issue. He said that his Government endorsed fully the Conclusion prepared following the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in 2008, which emphasized the importance of political will on that issue. Solutions to protracted refugee situations must take into account the opinion of the populations concerned as well as human rights, and he emphasized that voluntary repatriation was the preferred solution in that regard.

6. Algeria continued to provide shelter in Tindouf to refugees in a protracted situation from the non-self-governing territory of the occupied Western Sahara. By granting asylum to the Sahrawi people whose territory had been occupied by force, in violation of international law, his country had demonstrated its solidarity with a people whose fundamental rights had not been respected. International protection of the Sahrawi people was an established reality, confirmed in a report published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2006 and by Mr. Guterres during his recent visit to the region. The High Commissioner had declared at the current session that it was necessary to find a political solution to that human tragedy and the Government of Algeria supported fully his recommended approach to protect Sahrawi refugees.

7. **Mr. Verros** (Greece) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made on behalf of the European Union, especially with regard to the reiterated commitment of the member States of the European Union to continue to support its member States that received disproportionately high numbers of migrants. Greece in particular faced increasing migratory pressure due to its geographical position on the borders of Europe with Asia and Africa and its extensive land and sea borders. Greece had taken in one quarter of all the illegal migrants in the European Union and was ranked sixth among European Union countries with regard to the total number of asylum requests. His Government had therefore taken all appropriate measures to protect asylum-seekers and had always respected the fundamental principle of non-refoulement. Recently, a joint operation had been undertaken with the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders to guarantee respect for international standards concerning procedures for the reception of migrants and asylum-seekers.

8. His Government had enacted new legislation in June 2009 on the asylum process, which allowed asylum requests to be dealt with more quickly while ensuring that every decision contained detailed legal reasoning and clear information on the right to appeal. Although that Act had not been received with a great deal of enthusiasm by the UNHCR Office in Greece, his Government was confident that the international organizations and NGOs would be able to help those in need of international protection, especially at the north-eastern borders, within the framework of a harmonized Common European Asylum System. The joint programme between UNHCR and Greece to raise public awareness of the issue of refugees was a good example of cooperation at that level. Furthermore, he recalled that Greece would be hosting the intergovernmental Third Global Forum on Migration and Development, which would take place in Athens, from 4 to 5 November 2009.

9. **Mr. Murshid** (Bangladesh) said that he supported the High Commissioner's statement that protection of refugees was primarily under the jurisdiction of States and that UNHCR should not seek to replace them. Nevertheless, UNHCR's competencies were useful in establishing the status of persons who had left their country and he called on UNHCR to exercise that responsibility with caution, while remaining sensitive to the realities of the local situation. He noted that the Executive Committee had not approved the Conclusion on protracted refugee situations and called on UNHCR to examine the reasons for that disagreement. Viable solutions to protracted situations were well known and, when

attempts had been made to broaden that traditional approach, legitimate difficulties had been encountered by countries of asylum and regions affected by flows of refugees. To speed up the adoption of the Conclusion, UNHCR should aim to avoid introducing new, untested elements into the Conclusion. His delegation reiterated its unreserved support for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on the protracted refugee situation of 2008.

10. Bangladesh called on UNHCR to strengthen measures to mitigate the negative effects of environmental degradation in regions affected by the presence of refugees. Additional resources must be invested in order to challenge those concerns and address the current budgetary gaps of UNHCR in that area. He expressed support for UNHCR's initiative to adapt the protection system, bearing in mind the specific needs of children. He also welcomed the forthcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue on urban refugees scheduled for December 2009, which would improve the definition of policies on that issue.

11. **Mr. Seytre** (France) said that the protection of civilians in armed conflicts was a priority for his Government, which would continue to work to improve that protection, notably within the Security Council. He welcomed UNHCR's protection measures to provide special assistance to women and children, the primary victims of armed conflicts. The terrible conditions in which migrants and asylum-seekers crossed the Mediterranean Sea required a common response from the European Union, working with the transit countries. In that regard, France was a great advocate of the principle of non-refoulement and hoped that the security challenges would not adversely affect protection of refugees. France attached great importance to finding sustainable solutions for refugees and displaced persons, in particular through voluntary repatriation. UNHCR was to be congratulated for having facilitated the return of 2 million persons in 2008. Since becoming a refugee resettlement State in February 2008, France was aware of the need to share the burden and supported the initiative of the European Commission for a European Union-wide joint resettlement programme, based on the voluntary participation of member States. His country also supported steps to implement a Common European Asylum System. Great importance was also attached to the Conclusions of UNHCR on the international protection of refugees, but he regretted that the Executive Committee had not been able to adopt them during the current session. He called on all delegations to continue their efforts to ensure the adoption of the Conclusions on protracted refugee situations in December 2009.

12. **Mr. Mendoza** (Observer for Panama) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC). He expressed his Government's satisfaction with the cooperation projects undertaken by UNHCR in the east of the province of Panama, in the indigenous regions of Kuna Yala, Madugandi, Wargandi and Embera Wounan, and in the Darien province, which were the areas most affected by the presence of refugees and displaced persons. Those projects offered valuable protection to vulnerable groups arriving in Panama and to indigenous populations living in those regions. In conjunction with other institutions, including the Red Cross, the National Bureau of Panama for Refugees and UNHCR, his Government had undertaken projects to strengthen protection against refoulement, improve physical security and reduce incidents of sexual abuse and sexist violence. Efforts were also being made to improve refugees' access to basic services and to meet their basic needs.

13. With regard to the High Commissioner's comment on the progressive reduction of humanitarian space in developed countries, he said that, according to recent surveys, more and more economic migrants from the Horn of Africa were settling in the Darien province after having been abandoned by merchant ships on the northern coasts of South America. He asked UNHCR for cooperation to ensure that those persons did not become victims of trafficking, abuse or exploitation.

14. **Mr. Sibanda** (Lawyers for Human Rights), speaking on behalf of the NGO community, said that in 2009, NGOs had witnessed practices that violated the tenets of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Their concerns had already been highlighted, particularly with regard to the following issues: the increasing use of detention of refugees, particularly children, for migration-control purposes; restrictions on access to territories and the reduction of asylum space; “responsibility shifting” of some States, which gave rise to cases of refoulement of refugees; the vulnerability of refugees as well as NGOs and UNHCR personnel on the ground and the environmental impact of displacement, particularly around refugee camps. In 2009, the NGOs wished to draw attention specifically to the following issues: practices of purported “voluntary” repatriation and of returning asylum-seekers; protracted urban refugee and internal displaced persons situations; mainstreaming protection and humanitarian assistance when dealing with mixed migration flows and the impact of UNHCR’s structural reform process on refugee protection.

15. Voluntary repatriation remained one of the key durable solutions available to refugees, but in certain instances refugees had not been able to make a free and informed decision nor had they been adequately protected. States and UNHCR should also consider other durable solutions such as local integration and resettlement. Furthermore, protection evaluations must take into account the security risks that refugees, particularly women and other vulnerable persons, could face upon their return. NGOs also remained very concerned about the forced returns of rejected asylum-seekers, particularly those who arrived in mixed migration flows.

16. The NGO community welcomed the efforts of UNHCR and of States to address the challenges posed by protracted, camp-based refugee situations, but drew attention to the need to give more consideration to those refugees living in urban areas. In that regard, although he welcomed the new UNHCR policy on urban refugees, he hoped that it would be possible to test the policy in the field to evaluate the impact on the populations concerned. He expressed the NGO community’s continuing support for the efforts made by UNHCR and by States to ensure protection-sensitive policy responses to mixed migration flows and encouraged States to include protection in all of their migratory policies. He cautioned strongly against watering down or reinterpreting international protection principles on the basis of regional specificities. Finally, he expressed the NGO community’s ongoing support for UNHCR’s structural reform process and reiterated the request that robust feedback mechanisms from all stakeholders, particularly the affected populations, be implemented.

17. **Ms. Feller** (Assistant High Commissioner for Protection), referring to the points raised several times by delegations, said that she understood that many delegations wanted protection agencies and the States themselves to be more directly involved with regard to urban refugees. Concerning the request by the Lawyers for Human Rights on field tests for urban refugee policies, she noted that UNHCR intended to implement that policy in a certain number of countries in order to establish its strengths and weaknesses and, depending on the results, to develop it further. Given the lack of solutions to protracted situations, as was the case in Sudan, UNHCR was currently studying the effects on the environment of the long-term presence of refugees in the country of reception and was continuing to implement a certain number of initiatives in that field. She noted with satisfaction that a certain number of delegations, including France, had asked the Committee to draw its conclusions on the issue by December 2009. In response to the comment by the delegate of Bangladesh on the need for UNHCR to examine the reasons for the difficulties encountered in adopting conclusions, she said that many questions had been asked internally and she encouraged Bangladesh and other delegations to do the same as part of a collective effort.

18. In response to the question on how to evaluate the role of the cluster approach in improving protection, she noted that, in the light of the experience gained, there was a tangible difference with regard to protecting refugees on the ground. As some delegations had requested more information on that issue, it was planned to carry out an internal evaluation. With regard to the protection of persons arriving in a country via the sea and the ensuing problems, she noted that UNHCR was aware of the pressures faced by countries such as Greece and Italy due to their geographical situation. While UNHCR welcomed any amendments that sought to deal more quickly and more effectively with asylum-seekers, it wished however to be assured that the changes would not be made to the detriment of the guarantees of due process and, in particular, the right of appeal. With regard to stateless persons and in response to the comments by the delegate of the Republic of Korea on the need to reinforce UNHCR activities, she noted that UNHCR had recently begun to concern itself with the issues of individual and collective protection in addition to its technical advice activities to assist States who were developing their legislation. She added that Germany, who had highlighted the need to increase UNHCR resources in that area, had seconded an extra administrator to the service responsible for issues concerning statelessness. Furthermore, UNHCR intended to reinforce that service within the framework of the future structural reform of the Division of International Protection. With regard to protection of unaccompanied minors, UNHCR noted with satisfaction that Governments were concerned by the issue and had requested targeted operations in order to provide a systematic response to various needs linked to age, gender and origin. UNHCR considered that those concerned should participate in the decisions taken concerning their well-being and their future.

19. With regard to resettlement, she welcomed the decision by the Government of Japan to implement a pilot project and added that UNHCR would provide support for that initiative. Concerning refugee status determination, UNHCR was committed to helping Governments reinforce their competencies in that area and would agree to the request from Zambia on screening procedures. She said that UNHCR welcomed the new bill on the same issue, currently being examined by the Russian Federation, as it took into account observations and recommendations made by UNHCR and should ensure the end of "parallel processes". With regard to mixed migration flows and in reply to the concerns voiced about capacity-building, she said that a conference would be held in November 2009 on the challenges of refugee protection in the context of mixed migration flows in the Americas, organized by UNHCR, the Organization of American States and the International Organization for Migration. With regard to UNHCR guidelines and their implementation within domestic legislation, she said they were based on the most recent information, which was verified regularly, received from a variety of sources and in particular from Governments themselves. Furthermore, consideration would be given to possible changes to the presentation of guidelines by UNHCR. Finally, she said that UNHCR would consider the proposal by Norway to apply the policy for urban refugees to internally displaced persons.

**(b) Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight (A/AC.96/1064, A/AC.96/1065, A/AC.96/1067 and Add.1, A/AC.96/1069, A/AC.96/1073, A/AC.96/1074, A/AC.96/1075 and A/AC.96/1077)**

20. **Mr. Johnstone** (Deputy High Commissioner), introducing the Report on the Work of the Standing Committee (A/AC.96/1075), listed the main, internal reform activities carried out in 2009. UNHCR had undertaken a large number of changes; however, every single one had been necessary in light of the overall reform and changes were often interdependent. Results-based management was undoubtedly the most important change. In order to implement the new management method, it had been necessary to put into practice the Global Needs Assessment, which had been adopted mainly as a basis for a reliable

management system. There remained much to be done, but the principal tools had been put in place. For the future, it was important to stay the course, to make sure that the Focus software worked properly, to foster a results-based culture within the Organization and to evaluate the results.

21. Taking stock of 2008, he emphasized that the results had been very positive and the carry-over came to US\$ 85 million. Furthermore, no restrictions had been imposed during the year and all the budgetary objectives had been achieved. The budget for 2009 was \$1,275 million. As the total of funds available was \$1,120 million, there was a shortfall of \$155 million, of which it was anticipated that \$89 million could be raised. Therefore, over the last quarter of the year, between \$60 and \$70 million would have to be collected. That amount would make it possible to meet a certain number of the current needs in Yemen, Uganda, Cameroon, Ecuador, Georgia, Rwanda and Thailand, and successfully to complete programmes that had been postponed for lack of financial support. With regard to the 29 supplementary budgets, contributions to date totalled \$621 million, whereas the amount needed was \$990 million. In particular, more than \$25 million was needed for Somalia, \$50 million for the Dadaab camps in Kenya, \$14 million for Darfur, \$16 million for Southern Sudan, more than \$4 million for Yemen and more than \$6 million for Chad.

22. With regard to financial oversight, he said that the United Nations Board of Auditors had made two remarks: the first in relation to the audit certificates for 2008, which the Board had not received in time; the second on asset management. In that regard, the introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) would improve oversight in line with requirements. The Board of Auditors had also noted that UNHCR had not accounted for end-of-service and post-retirement liabilities. UNHCR was looking into that issue with other agencies of the United Nations system, as they were in the same situation.

23. With regard to the 2008–2009 internal audit, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had commented on the management of programme and evaluation funds. The comments made by the OIOS and the observations of UNHCR had led to a major reform of evaluation activities. The Office had also commented on many aspects of supply chain management, particularly asset management. A number of changes were being put in place to follow-up on those comments.

24. **Ms. Norton** (Canada) said that, on the whole, her Government supported UNHCR's efforts to build a stronger and more results-oriented agency, and in particular the large-scale structural and management reform process, forward planning and prioritization, the move to a biennial budget and Global Needs Assessment. The needs-based budget could, however, raise expectations of all stakeholders, which might remain unfulfilled. She commended the efforts made so far on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming and called on UNHCR to deploy further efforts to reinforce accountability on that issue.

25. Nevertheless, she wished to express her delegation's disappointment regarding the announcement that UNHCR would not be able to meet the previously agreed date of 1 January 2010 for the implementation of IPSAS. As part of the evaluation process, she welcomed the emphasis given to actively seeking the views of persons of concern, as refugees and displaced persons needed to be engaged more in evaluating the effectiveness of UNHCR's activities, given that they were ultimately those who suffered when the collective efforts of the international community failed to address their needs.

26. **Mr. Murlrean** (United States of America) welcomed UNHCR's decentralization efforts to devote more resources to field operations rather than administrative activities at its headquarters in Geneva. However, it was essential that UNHCR headquarters ensured quality control and programme consistency across regions. The Global Management Accountability Framework should facilitate that process and he requested an update on the

effectiveness of the Framework during the pilot roll-out. He considered that the Focus software could be very useful for establishing priorities. Also, he said that UNHCR was correct to seek new funding opportunities in order to meet all its budgetary needs. However, UNHCR headquarters would need to instruct field staff not to request earmarked funds or funds for activities that were not in line with the Organization's global strategic priorities.

27. He welcomed Arnaud Akodjenou as the new Inspector General and expressed hope that his Office would adopt a more strategic and focused approach in order to produce reports more quickly. He expressed support for the review of UNHCR's financial rules, in the context of the new budget structure and IPSAS compliance, but noted that the proposal submitted had raised many questions. He said that his delegation continued to wait for the matrix delineating the roles and responsibilities of various, potentially overlapping, oversight functions.

28. **Mr. Arias** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, expressed support for the reorganization and budgetary reforms of UNHCR and considered that the new UNHCR budget structure, which established a distinction between programmes for refugees and stateless persons and projects to reintegrate and support internally displaced persons, should help to improve administration and management within the Organization. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States welcomed the mainstreaming of age, gender and diversity criteria in the Global Needs Assessment method. In the context of the global crisis, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States considered that it was essential to establish priorities within UNHCR's activities, without them necessarily being to the detriment of meeting the basic needs of refugees and other persons receiving assistance.

29. Speaking on behalf of Venezuela, he expressed satisfaction with the budgetary reforms undertaken. He emphasized that the response capacity of UNHCR largely depended on States' peacebuilding efforts. While conflicts continued to multiply around the world, UNHCR would find it difficult to satisfy all the humanitarian needs. Any initiative taken internally to improve effectiveness was welcome. For their part, States should spare no effort to establish a culture of peace and to promote tolerance. Accordingly, he called for the withdrawal of invading forces from occupied territories and for the peaceful and negotiated resolution of other situations of conflict.

30. **Mr. Kragholm** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, said that the four Nordic countries supported the ongoing reforms and were looking forward to the consolidation phase, when it should be possible to assess efficiency gains. He welcomed the fact that the 2010–2011 budget was based on results-based management, the Global Strategic Priorities and the Global Needs Assessment. It was essential that the budget reflected the actual needs on the ground and gave States members a clear idea of those needs. He encouraged UNHCR to undertake the Global Needs Assessment in close cooperation with other agencies to further strengthen humanitarian actions. However, since the budget was at risk of not being fully funded, prioritization would be of the utmost importance in 2010. The issue of audit certificates, raised in the Board of Auditors report, deserved further consideration and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions should be studied.

31. He expressed the Nordic countries' support for the broader humanitarian reform process, welcoming the lead role played by UNHCR in three of the main fields of operations, particularly for internally displaced persons, and urged UNHCR to continue to support the work of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Humanitarian Coordinators in the field, as well as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in order to provide humanitarian aid as effectively as possible. He also welcomed the common humanitarian funds and the progress made in streamlining the strategy to include age,



gender and diversity criteria in operations, even if there was still much to be done with regard to gender equality.

32. Finally, in times of economic crisis, it was important that donor countries continued to provide UNHCR with the necessary funding to carry out its humanitarian work. He said that the Nordic countries continued to support the work of UNHCR and encouraged other countries to follow suit. He commended those countries that had increased their voluntary contributions between 2008 and 2009, as well as those host States taking in increasing numbers of refugees.

33. **Mr. Dennison** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that he was keen to see the final version of the matrix that would outline UNHCR's oversight activities, as it would be an important tool for understanding the division of labour between various agencies concerned. He said that although his Government understood the logic behind the proposed amendments to the financial rules, which were compatible with the new budget structure, the original draft amendments still raised many questions. In order for the new rules to be approved in due course, he would appreciate hearing in the near future, the views of other external expert bodies on the issue. Finally, he said that he looked forward to exploring with UNHCR ways to develop and enhance internal and external audit functions, including through the establishment of an independent expert audit committee, and he urged UNHCR to continue its efforts to achieve IPSAS compliance as soon as possible.

34. **Mr. Chuplygin** (Russian Federation) said that he supported UNHCR's new budgetary policy in its entirety and its objective of broadening the donor base in order to reduce the budget deficit. Given the importance attached to financing for programmes to combat statelessness by his Government, which intended to continue contributing to UNHCR activities, the possibility of the Russian Federation's accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness was being examined. With regard to urgent humanitarian situations, his Government was prepared to examine UNHCR's calls for assistance on a case-by-case basis and to cooperate at the level of his Ministry on urgent situations and combating natural disasters. He said that his Government doubted that the revised financial rules could be adopted in their present form and requested further details on the proposal to resort to funds from external sources. However, he regretted that, in order to implement the changes to the financial regulations as part of the move to IPSAS compliance, UNHCR had not coordinated its activities more closely with those of other United Nations organizations and agencies.

35. **Mr. Alagbash** (Sudan) asked why UNHCR programmes in Darfur, Southern Sudan and in the regions of Southern Kordofan, the Blue Nile and Abyei were in deficit. He emphasized that the lack of financing would have negative repercussions on the return of refugees from neighbouring countries and called on donor countries to respond to the High Commissioner's request so that the necessary funds be allocated to those programmes, as well as other programmes implemented by UNHCR in Darfur.

36. **Ms. Sato** (Japan) said that the comprehensive structural reform undertaken by UNHCR would further the organization's effectiveness in delivering assistance to beneficiaries. She welcomed the adoption of the new budgetary structure, the introduction of the Global Needs Assessment policy as part of the results-based management framework, and UNHCR's desire to improve the transparency of budgetary discussions, including the components formally under Supplementary Budgets. Even if adjustments would undoubtedly be necessary in 2010, she recalled that it was important to set an appropriate budget target in order to avoid any capping or termination of projects in the middle of the year. With regard to the revision of the financial rules, she said that her Government wished to be informed of the views of experts, particularly those from bodies

other than the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on the issue.

37. **Mr. Johnstone** (Deputy High Commissioner) expressed his thanks to the delegations of the States members of the Executive Committee for their support for the reform process. With regard to the financial regulations reform, he said that the decision-making bodies of the United Nations had been consulted, that experts' opinions had been sought and that the next draft of the amendments, which should be available shortly, should enable them to resolve the concerns raised and to reach an agreement before the end of the year. In response to the comments from the delegation of Canada, he acknowledged that the Global Needs Assessment policy might raise expectations unduly, but UNHCR's main concern was not managing expectations but managing programme implementation costs. The budgetary objectives would be set, then revised throughout the year if necessary, depending on the progress of pledges for funding, in order to avoid capping the budget at the end of the year. Furthermore, UNHCR was keen to have effective evaluation mechanisms. A new version of the matrix to clarify oversight responsibilities should be available soon, which would avoid any overlap between activities.

38. With regard to the adoption of IPSAS, he said that UNHCR had not wanted to act to the detriment of the development of the Focus software, the Global Needs Assessment and results-based management. He apologized for not meeting the deadline first set for 1 January 2010 and recalled that other United Nations agencies were not on target either. He said that he hoped that the regulations would be adopted before the next biennial budget. Even though the situation had improved over the last two years and draconian internal measures had been taken, particularly with regard to recruitment and promotions, UNHCR was aware of the poor results with regard to gender equality and age, gender and diversity mainstreaming, both of its staff and its beneficiaries. Much still needed to be done in that area. The first year of testing of the Focus software would soon be complete and definitive improvements would be incorporated shortly.

39. Priority-setting had been an ongoing concern for the Organization since it was established. There was no easy answer to that problem, but UNHCR was actively seeking ways to ensure that the basic needs of beneficiaries were taken into account when priorities were set. The new management tool, Focus, should facilitate that aim. In reply to a question on local funding, he said that greater consideration should be given to the problem of which oversight function should be applied to local UNHCR Representatives who sought funding themselves. However, *prima facie*, he considered that if the funds sought were for activities already approved in the budget following the Global Needs Assessment, the UNHCR Representative did not need to request authorization from headquarters. According to the observations of field offices, examples of that type of step being taken for activities not included in the budget did not seem to present a serious problem.

40. He thanked the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for his comments on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and for his country's active contribution to the Global Needs Assessment process. He emphasized the good cooperation between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and UNHCR in managing refugee problems in that country. The Global Needs Assessment had received strong support, particularly financial, from the Nordic countries. He agreed that it was necessary for UNHCR funding to be flexible in order to meet refugees' needs and to take decisions based on those needs, restricting earmarked funding as much as possible. He also agreed that mechanisms linked to centralized funding needed to be freed of red tape. With regard to training, the Global Service Centre in Budapest would double training for UNHCR. A certain number of preliminary ideas had already been considered for the training of future local representatives in the various competencies necessary to direct a UNHCR operation.

41. He thanked the Representative of the Russian Federation for his proposal to study the possibility of providing UNHCR with financial assistance and contributions in kind for activities planned until the end of 2009 for which there was as yet no funding and to fill gaps in the 2010 budget. In reply to the Representative of Sudan, he said that difficulties had been encountered in financing programmes in Southern Sudan and Darfur and invited donors to make more efforts to resolve the matter. However, he considered that the main obstacles were the many security issues that prevented UNHCR from being as effective as it would like in the region. UNHCR wished to continue working with the Government of Sudan to solve the problems, particularly financial ones. Finally, he said that he agreed with the opinion of the Representative of Japan on the new budgetary structure introduced for 2010–2011, which would for the first time give members of the Executive Committee an overall view of all of UNHCR programmes.

**Reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation**  
(A/AC.96/1070 and 1071)

42. **Mr. Akodjenou** (Inspector General of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) invited the Committee Members to refer to the Report on activities of the Inspector General's Office (A/AC.96/1070), for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009. During that period and since, the Inspector General's Office (IGO) had been following up the recommendations of the Independent Panel Review of the UNHCR Inspector General's Office, carried out by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). More than half of those recommendations had already been implemented; they included: coordination between oversight functions, which had significantly improved; the inspection strategy and procedures, which had been revised; training of inspection staff; the policy document outlining the mandate of the Office, its functions and *modus operandi vis-à-vis* other oversight actors; and sharing best practices with other agencies.

43. The IGO had carried out 13 standard inspections during the reporting period and 5 more were scheduled to take place before the end of the year. A general finding from those inspections had been that field offices must be given adequate resources and their staff must receive the necessary training to perform their new responsibilities resulting from decentralization and regionalization. Another, recurrent observation was the need to strengthen managerial capacities. In addition to the measures implemented following the OLAF recommendations aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness of the inspection strategy, the Inspection Handbook was being revised. The IGO had continued to register a significant level of compliance with its recommendations by inspected field offices and units at headquarters. UNHCR's new Global Management Accountability Framework should complement existing follow-up procedures, whose effectiveness had been confirmed by the OLAF review.

44. The IGO contributed to the overall integrity of UNHCR's operations by investigating reports of possible misconduct by UNHCR personnel. During the reporting period, 100 complaints had been registered, a figure which remained unchanged compared to previous years. Investigations into 72 cases had been completed, 14 of which had resulted in a preliminary investigation report being transmitted to the Division of Human Resources Management for action. The other investigations had been closed for lack of evidence. Priority was given to cases affecting UNHCR beneficiaries. Six cases of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse had come to light during the reporting period. Two of them had been closed as the allegations could not be substantiated, while the remaining four cases were still being investigated. Processing cases of harassment and abuse of authority, which made up 22 per cent of all cases, was an issue of concern for the IGO.

45. With regard to ad hoc inquiries during the reporting period, the IGO had reported to the High Commissioner on the inquiry into the attack carried out in December 2007 against

UNHCR staff and offices in Algiers, and had conducted an inquiry in October 2008 into complaints regarding UNHCR's response to the xenophobic violence in South Africa. A report on that inquiry had been presented to the High Commissioner and subsequently transmitted to Member States. Another inquiry had just been launched into the violent attacks on UNHCR staff in Pakistan.

46. **Ms. Baller** (Netherlands) thanked Mr. Akodjenou for his report. She said that her delegation supported the use of mechanisms such as the Independent Panel Review mentioned in the report. She expressed her gratitude to the Inspector General for indicating the obstacles to reform. An important issue was centralized monitoring of programme management. She asked for details of the measures taken to improve the recruitment of administrators.

47. **Mr. Akodjenou** (Inspector General of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that IGO had received a number of comments directly from delegations or their Governments and would meet with delegations at the earliest opportunity to address the issues raised. He recalled that the IGO was not solely responsible for monitoring programme management. The "matrix" documents, currently being drafted, would detail the role and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders involved in monitoring and supporting programmes, and a new division had been set up to coordinate programme support and management.

48. **Mr. Crisp** (Head of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service) presented the report on the activities of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee. As the report, which summarized PDES activities, had been prepared in July, an update would soon be posted on the evaluation page of the UNHCR website. The structural and management reform process of UNHCR had several consequences for PDES activities. Firstly, evaluations would be focused more at the country programme level, with a corresponding reduction in resources devoted to global and thematic evaluations. Secondly, PDES would report to the new Deputy High Commissioner, who would assume responsibility for ensuring that evaluation findings and recommendations were taken into account in policymaking, planning and resource allocation. Thirdly, PDES would cooperate closely with the new Division of Programme Support and Management, whose responsibilities had obvious links with the evaluation function.

49. The evaluation function was a support tool for decision-making and planning. It provided a basis for coherent policy formulation and strategic planning. UNHCR's new urban refugee policy drew upon the PDES review of the UNHCR operation for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of the Middle East. Evaluation findings also provided support to UNHCR in the field of reform. The evaluation by PDES of UNHCR's supply chain management system had played an important role in the decision to establish a new Emergency and Supply Chain Management Division. Moreover, the work of PDES could be used to promote good practices. For example, its evaluation of the cash grant programme in Burundi had led the Africa Bureau to consider whether that form of assistance should also be introduced to the return and reintegration programme in Southern Sudan. Evaluation findings could also be a means of strengthening partnerships, as had been the case with the review of mixed migrations in the Canary Islands, which had helped UNHCR deepen its cooperation with the Spanish authorities on that matter. Evaluation findings were also used for training purposes, providing examples of effective and ineffective practices.

*The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.*