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Sixty-first session

Summary record of the 640th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 4 October 2010, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Woolcott.....(Australia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Zugic** (Serbia) said that the ministers for foreign affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, in a joint communiqué issued following a regional ministerial conference on the theme of cooperation to find durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons, had emphasized the need to intensify regional cooperation in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and durable solution. As a follow-up to that conference, an international donor conference would be held to discuss the creation of a fund to facilitate the return or local integration of refugees, the closure of collective centres and the provision of assistance to those most in need. Following the conference, the four countries had begun working together, primarily through bilateral and regional meetings, on two main issues: exchanges of statistics and preparation of regional projects. On the first issue, Serbia had already submitted all the data required and it welcomed the fact that a joint regional project was being prepared in order to assist the most vulnerable people who still lived in collective centres.
2. In Serbia, there were 210,000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo who were not in a position to return to their homes; Serbia was determined to help them by conducting special projects.
3. **Mr. Pellet** (France) said that France fully aligned itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.
4. He was concerned about the terrible floods that had devastated Pakistan, the intercommunity violence in Kyrgyzstan and the situation in Haiti, where a violent storm had just struck in the wake of the unusually strong earthquake.
5. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Chad remained alarming. France, which was closely involved in the deployment of the European Union peacekeeping force (EUFOR), would remain mobilized in order to contribute to strengthening the capacities of the *Détachement intégré de sécurité* (Integrated Security Detachment).
6. The persistence of sexual violence in several countries was another subject of concern. The widespread incidents of rape that had occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo showed that it was vital to strengthen the early-warning mechanism on the ground and the mandate to protect civilians participating in peacekeeping operations. In dealing with the shrinking of humanitarian space, France would continue to put the protection of civilians at the heart of its action. It would further continue to promote the swift integration of reconstruction into peacekeeping strategies.
7. With regard to the Tindouf refugee camps, France regretted that the family visit programme had been blocked and called on the parties concerned to reopen dialogue with a view to the rapid resumption of flights.
8. The system of exhaustively assessing UNHCR needs might show, at the end of 2010, that there was a considerable funding shortfall in comparison to needs. Extra rigour must therefore be employed in assessing needs, committing to spending and preparing reports.
9. **Ms. Arango Olmos** (Colombia) said that her country supported the statement delivered on behalf of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.
10. Colombia was a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967. The decree on the refugee status determination procedure, adopted in November 2009, cited the definition of “refugee”

given in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees and made reference to article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

11. Colombia had adopted policies on internally displaced persons that focused on three key aspects — prevention, protection and care; truth, justice and reparation; voluntary return or resettlement — and had increased the budget for their implementation, to a total of \$2,892 billion for the period 2007–2010. In coordination with partner institutions, in June 2009 the Colombian Government and UNHCR had adopted a plan for the period 2010–2011 to strengthen the capacities of the Colombian State. Despite the Government’s efforts with respect to security and care of internally displaced persons, Colombia faced serious challenges, since illegal armed groups continued to use intimidation and forced recruitment and to plant anti-personnel mines. Colombia continued to assist Colombian refugees in Ecuador inter alia by facilitating voluntary return, but the migration picture in the region was complex. In general, the Colombian Government needed more precise and accurate figures on Colombian refugees in border areas.

12. **Mr. Schweppe** (Germany) said that he supported the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

13. He welcomed the initiatives taken by UNHCR to mobilize new funding partners among Member States and to increase the proportion of its income provided by non-State donors. Germany welcomed the active participation of UNHCR in strengthening coordination of humanitarian action. With respect to needs assessment, it hoped that UNHCR would continue to play an active role in the task force that had been set up in 2009 under the auspices of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). In a context of growing needs and increasingly complex crises, Germany encouraged UNHCR to support OCHA in its efforts to improve system-wide analysis, guidance and policies. Germany further encouraged UNHCR in its efforts regarding the humanitarian impact of climate change.

14. Germany had actively participated in negotiating the draft conclusions on persons with disabilities; while it would have preferred a more ambitious document, it looked forward to the forthcoming adoption of the conclusions. It called on UNHCR to pursue its work on birth registration and to continue to involve Member States.

15. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that Morocco welcomed the interest shown by UNHCR in 2010 in the protection of urban refugees and refugees with disabilities and in birth registration. Morocco furthermore welcomed the finalization of the draft conclusions on persons with disabilities and urged UNHCR to launch informal consultations on birth registration.

16. He was, however, very concerned at the refusal to allow UNHCR to register Moroccan citizens detained in the Tindouf camps. The World Food Programme (WFP), in its “Projected Needs for WFP Projects and Operations”, or Blue Book for 2010, noted that, until the population had been registered, WFP and UNHCR would continue to use the figure of 90,000 persons. In any case, the United Nations Secretary-General had now made UNHCR responsible for conducting a census in the Tindouf camps and setting an action plan and schedule for interviews with individuals in the camps. Algeria, for its part, had a political and moral obligation to respond to the Secretary-General’s appeal and to cooperate with UNHCR in conducting the census. Donor countries also had their part to play and should no longer turn a blind eye to the diversion of aid intended for the population of the camps. Morocco appealed to Algeria, UNHCR, donor countries and the international community to make efforts to break the deadlock, and UNHCR must be granted access to the refugees and allowed to register and consult them individually.

17. **Mr. Jazairy** (Algeria) said that Algeria endorsed the statement delivered by Djibouti on behalf of the African Group.

18. Algeria welcomed the internal reform and streamlining efforts made by UNHCR. With regard to UNHCR staffing, he noted that Africa could be more equitably represented, especially at higher levels. Regarding the expansion of the mandate of UNHCR, a more in-depth analysis seemed necessary in order to determine the consequences for the provision of adequate protection and assistance to each category of beneficiary. Mixed migration flows were a challenge that UNHCR must meet in the context of both a hardening of migration policy in some States and excessive politicization of the issue. With respect to funding UNHCR activities, donors, which continued to earmark voluntary contributions, should afford UNHCR the necessary flexibility on the matter.

19. Regarding refugees and internally displaced persons in the Middle East and North Africa, but also in the African continent as a whole, Algeria took the view that the situation could be improved, despite its complexity. He commended the High Commissioner for his commitment to dealing with 25 protracted refugee situations and said that he fully subscribed to the view taken by UNHCR that each protracted situation required a comprehensive approach with solutions adapted to the circumstances.

20. The tradition of hospitality in Algeria had been demonstrated for many years to the benefit of 165,000 Saharan refugees in Tindouf, who had come from Non-Self-Governing Territories of Western Sahara. Delegations were invited to read the communiqué issued by the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the matter on 26 September 2010. Algeria hoped that meetings of the Executive Committee would no longer be used as an opportunity to exploit the issue for political ends or to launch accusations.

21. **Ms. Pria** (Italy) said that her country endorsed the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

22. In recent years, Italy had made great progress in establishing a system of reception and protection that complied with European standards. In addition to offering asylum and subsidiary protection, Italy offered “humanitarian protection” to all those who did not meet the criteria for international protection but who were in a very vulnerable situation.

23. As an entry gate to Europe, Italy had recently observed a sharp increase in the flow of migrants arriving from Africa; it took the view that the very heavy burden should be shared more fairly. Significant progress had been made, including with the adoption of a programme for 2010–2014 and the opening of the European Asylum Support Office. Nevertheless, the European Union could take a firmer stance vis-à-vis countries of origin and transit. The issue of Africa must be tackled without delay and with greater resolve by the European Union and the international community. To date, the situation of sub-Saharan countries and the Horn of Africa had been neglected. The forthcoming conference between the European Union and Africa would provide an opportunity to boost relations between Europe and the African continent, and only with the involvement of countries where those in need of protection stayed, often for long periods, could protection standards be improved and criminal organizations be combated more effectively.

24. Italy was particularly concerned about the situation in the Horn of Africa, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The issue of unaccompanied minors required concerted action at all levels, especially at the European level, particularly with a view to combating trafficking in and exploitation of persons.

25. With respect to efforts to reform UNHCR, she said that, in a period of crisis, resources should be streamlined in order to benefit the target populations. Administrative rigour must be preserved, while additional resources must be made available to enable UNHCR to intervene effectively in crisis areas. The sixtieth anniversary of the Convention

relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) would provide an opportunity to consider measures to be taken to meet new protection challenges.

26. **Mr. Knutsson** (Sweden) said that the humanitarian response system needed to be enhanced to enable it to deal with disasters of the magnitude of those that had recently occurred in Haiti and Pakistan, since such large-scale disasters were likely to occur more frequently in the future. Despite the significant progress achieved, much remained to be done, particularly in regard to the cluster approach, surge capacity, common needs assessment and humanitarian leadership at the country level. Efforts must also be made to reduce the long-term vulnerability of States that were prone to major natural disasters.

27. Sweden supported the UNHCR reform process. Particular importance should be given to strengthening the UNHCR field presence, results-based management and needs-based budgeting. Moreover, the Global Needs Assessment process must be linked to the development of common needs assessments.

28. The High Commissioner's dialogue on protection gaps, the establishment of a common European asylum system and the search for durable solutions for protracted refugee situations were of particular importance. Sweden welcomed efforts by States and UNHCR to define the concept of strategic resettlement and urged all States to do more in that regard. It also called upon the organizations of the Global Migration Group to further enhance their collaboration.

29. **Mr. Hassan** (Yemen), recalling that his country hosted many refugees from the Horn of Africa, especially from Somalia, said that he urged the international community to help the Somali Government re-establish peace and security with a view to resolving a crisis that had been ongoing since 1991. Yemen was furthermore facing problems in dealing with displaced persons in the northern Sa'adah province and called upon the international community to help it meet the needs of the populations concerned. In particular, it was necessary to improve refugee camps, strengthen the capacities of the coastguard service in order to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden, provide refugees with health, training and employment services and create conditions conducive to voluntary returns.

30. **Mr. Sukanuma** (Japan) said that the shrinking of humanitarian space, which affected refugees and humanitarian workers alike, was a matter of concern. Protracted refugee situations were also a concern and to resolve them so as to enable refugees and displaced persons to return on a permanent basis would require a wide range of measures, including measures to improve living conditions in areas of return. In cooperation with UNHCR, Japan had launched a resettlement project — the only one of its kind in Asia — to allow groups of 30 refugees from Myanmar to come to Japan.

31. While Japan concurred with the High Commissioner that UNHCR should be the lead agency for the protection of people displaced by natural disasters, it did have questions regarding the human and financial resources that UNHCR would require to perform that additional role without adversely affecting its core mandate. Japan looked forward to discussing in detail the four conditions that had been presented by the High Commissioner in his statement.

32. Japan welcomed the UNHCR reforms, particularly in connection with cost reduction, needs assessment and the introduction of a new budget system, and endeavoured to contribute sufficient resources to UNHCR. Hence, its contributions in 2010 had exceeded a record \$143 million. In the light of the financial difficulties facing traditional donors, UNHCR must find new sources of funding, including from the private sector. Japan encouraged UNHCR to expand its partnerships with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, as well as with Japanese companies and NGOs.

33. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he was encouraged by progress achieved in discussions between the Governments of Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina on protracted refugee situations in the region and hoped that a durable solution would be found. UNHCR would pursue its initiatives to facilitate the voluntary return of the refugees without, however, becoming involved in existing political conflicts.

34. He concurred with the representative of France that it was crucial that the *Détachement intégré de sécurité* remained deployed in eastern Chad in order to preserve adequate humanitarian space in the region, particularly in the light of the proposed withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT).

35. The Colombian Government was to be commended for the institutional, financial and legislative measures that it had implemented to support displaced persons in Colombia, even if the problem had not been completely resolved. A comprehensive tripartite agreement between Colombia, Ecuador and UNHCR should be concluded in order to facilitate voluntary returns.

36. He agreed with the representative of Germany that gaps in the international protection system needed to be addressed in the light of major, interdependent global trends which had a negative impact on the situation of refugees and displaced persons. To that end, UNHCR was committed to developing reliable tools for needs analysis that took account of human rights and protection needs.

37. Although a political solution was required in Western Sahara, UNHCR must operate in a strictly apolitical manner. The refugee registration process must not be used for political or electoral ends. Responsibility for refugee protection lay primarily with host countries. Mindful, however, of its role in affording protection, UNHCR had decided to strengthen its presence in the refugee camps in the Tindouf region.

38. He welcomed the efforts by Algeria to improve its legislation on refugee protection and recalled that cooperation between UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), while indispensable must not lead to any blurring of their respective mandates and activities.

39. In response to the delegation of Italy, he said that he agreed on the need for greater cooperation between the European Union and Africa. Turning to the establishment of a common European asylum system, he stressed that persons in need of international protection must be granted access to territories that would afford them that protection.

40. Thanking Sweden for its humanitarian work and its financial support for UNHCR, he said he agreed that the limitations of existing response mechanisms had been revealed by the recent natural disasters in Haiti and Pakistan. He was confident that the reforms under way would ensure a more effective response to major crises in the future.

41. Noting the difficulties faced by Yemen, he said that he supported the appeal by the Yemeni Government for better burden sharing, and for stronger support from the international community for the region.

42. He drew attention to the unprecedented financial support that Japan had provided to UNHCR and the importance of the programme to resettle refugees from Myanmar.

43. **Mr. Logar** (Slovenia) said that the challenges facing UNHCR were constantly growing in number and complexity, owing both to global trends, including climate change and food insecurity, and to armed conflicts. Consequently, cooperation between stakeholders on the ground was all the more important; a report on the benefits of coordination in the field and its effects on policy convergence would be appreciated.

Stressing that UNHCR had received unprecedented financial support in 2009, he urged the Office to continue to involve the private sector and to identify innovative ways to fund its activities.

44. As the sixtieth anniversary of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees approached, Slovenia called on all States that had not yet ratified that Convention to do so.

45. Slovenia had been faced with a mass influx of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s and had granted asylum to approximately 36,000 people. To manage that situation better and guarantee the fundamental rights of displaced persons in line with Council of Europe legal instruments, Slovenia had adopted the Temporary Asylum Act in 1997 and the Temporary Protection of Displaced Persons Act in 2005. Slovenia, a member of the European Union since 2004, had enacted the International Protection Act of 2007, which regulated the granting of international protection and the rights and duties of persons afforded such protection. Moreover, in solidarity with other European Union member States, Slovenia had agreed to participate in the project to resettle refugees present in Malta.

46. **Mr. Ugonda Lemba** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the internal conflicts that had wracked the country, particularly in North Kivu, South Kivu and Equateur Province, had caused massive population displacements, both inside and outside the country. They had led to countless human rights violations, committed mainly by members of armed rebel groups, whom the Democratic Republic of the Congo sought to arrest and bring to justice. As stability was starting to return to areas that had previously been ravaged by war and many thousands of people were returning to their home regions, the State needed to rebuild the devastated infrastructure. The Democratic Republic of the Congo had concluded tripartite agreements with neighbouring countries, including Rwanda and the Central African Republic, to administer the repatriation process for Congolese refugees. The next stage was to ensure the long-term reintegration of those displaced persons and refugees. To that end, the Government had established a stabilization and reconstruction programme for the East that focused on economic recovery, community rehabilitation, improved security in areas that had been affected by hostilities, and conflict prevention and resolution. A key objective was to offer young people opportunities for a better future with a view to preventing their recruitment by armed groups.

47. **Mr. Himanen** (Finland) said that he fully supported the statement made by the representative of Belgium on behalf of the European Union.

48. To deal with refugee problems and humanitarian crises, the causes needed to be better understood: people were forced to leave their regions due to armed conflicts and natural disasters that were often caused by irrational natural resources management. In order to address the root causes of those phenomena, focusing on prevention, action by the entire international community was required.

49. The transition from humanitarian emergency relief phase to development should be better managed. The international community needed to better coordinate its activities in post-crisis recovery situations with a view to enhancing development cooperation thereafter. Greater emphasis should be placed on evaluating the impact of humanitarian reforms on aid recipients in the field in order to assess needs more accurately.

50. Clarity needed to be brought to the public debate on humanitarian immigration, as public opinion was increasingly hostile with regards to refugee issues. States, UNHCR and relevant NGOs should contribute to raising public awareness of the facts about migration and related humanitarian issues.

51. Finland planned to make unearmarked contributions over three years to support UNHCR activities, and an additional 1.45 million euros (€) would be disbursed shortly, bringing Finland's total contribution for 2010 to €17.65 million.

52. **Mr. He** (China) said he noted with satisfaction that the visit of UNHCR representatives to China in September 2010 had broadened the scope for cooperation and fostered mutual understanding.

53. Conflicts, natural disasters and the global economic crisis had caused the displacement of millions of people within their own countries in 2009. Although that situation had placed it under considerable strain, UNHCR had still been able to provide assistance to approximately 10.4 million refugees and displaced persons.

54. The international community should adopt a comprehensive approach to the refugee issue and address the root causes by taking concrete action to prevent and resolve conflicts and disasters, including through the establishment of humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of victims of conflicts or disasters.

55. Refugees must enjoy international protection, but a balance needed to be struck between protection and the prevention of abuse. Together with donors and international organizations, countries of origin and asylum countries should find durable solutions to refugee situations. UNHCR had a key role to play in that regard.

56. **Mr. Smorodin** (Russian Federation) said that ensuring continuity between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation with a view to eliminating the root causes of crises remained a key priority. The success of such an approach, which must be based on compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and with key humanitarian principles, depended in large measure on how it was integrated into efforts by the international community to achieve a political settlement. Under no circumstances should those efforts encroach on State sovereignty.

57. The Russian Federation cautioned against the politicization of UNHCR activities in the area of international protection and refugee assistance, particularly in connection with repatriation and post-conflict recovery issues, and accorded great importance to the provision by UNHCR of humanitarian assistance to persons in situations of forced displacement.

58. The Russian Federation was an active participant in efforts by the international community to resolve the issue of statelessness. Between 2006 and 2010, Russian citizenship had been granted to more than 245,000 stateless persons, while temporary residence permits had been issued to over 36,000 stateless persons and residence permits to over 33,000. A system of voluntary repatriation or resettlement in third countries had also been established. UNHCR was to be commended for the assistance that it provided to the international community in harmonizing procedures and laws and to the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation in enhancing domestic legislation and training specialists to work with asylum-seekers.

59. UNHCR efforts to increase budgetary resources and rationalize the use of international mechanisms were also to be commended.

60. **Mr. Smidt** (Denmark) said that his country was willing to take part in the debate on the role of UNHCR in protecting persons displaced by natural disasters.

61. The development strategies that Denmark had recently adopted highlighted its commitment to strengthening cooperation with the United Nations and UNHCR in order to support conflict-afflicted States more effectively in their efforts to restore stability and emerge from conflict. Cooperation with international organizations and other partners and a

long-term, regional approach were required to guarantee security and development, which went hand in hand.

62. His Government was aware that host countries needed assistance to cope with the impact of refugee influxes. A case in point was Kenya, which hosted many Somali and Sudanese refugees, and received legislative and capacity-building assistance from Denmark. The Danish Government welcomed efforts by the Government of Nepal to support the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees, and stood ready to consider hosting some of these refugees in Denmark.

63. Denmark fully supported the UNHCR management reform programme. UNHCR should continue its work on developing indicators and assessing humanitarian-assistance and protection needs. For UNHCR, furthermore, ensuring oversight and accountability was a key function and the Office should continue its work in that area.

64. **Mr. Leikvoll** (Norway) said that, in its humanitarian response, UNHCR should pay greater attention to the plight of women in situations of forced displacement and should take appropriate action in implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The number of displaced persons had reached 27.1 million in 2009, which necessitated the provision of further assistance and protection.

65. Protracted refugee situations were of particular concern: with a view to addressing them, Norway was chairing a contact group to consider durable resettlement solutions for Afghan refugees living in the Islamic Republic of Iran. UNHCR needed to make better use of mechanisms such as flash appeals and the Central Emergency Response Fund.

66. Climate change was causing further humanitarian disasters, including forced displacement, and the status of refugees displaced as a result of climate change needed to be enhanced and more clearly defined. A conference on that subject would shortly be held in Oslo. It was hoped that the conference would contribute to the work of UNHCR.

67. **Ms. Raoul** (Congo) said that, as a result of conflicts and natural disasters, the number of refugees and displaced persons was increasing steadily, particularly in Africa. The Congo was drafting a bill on refugee status determination, which drew on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

68. Her country had had to host 114,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which explained why a tripartite agreement had been signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and UNHCR.

69. A road map had furthermore been drawn up to help with the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees in Gabon, and the Congo was confident that the international community would support its efforts in that regard. The Congo intended to invoke the cessation clause on refugee status with a view to engaging all its citizens in national recovery efforts. It was grateful to the international community for its support during the humanitarian crisis in Likouala.

70. **Mr. Poludzen** (Belarus) said that the system for granting international protection to asylum-seekers in Belarus was based on a legislative framework that conformed to international standards. As Belarus was a transit country for those on their way to Western Europe, the numbers of asylum-seekers applying to that country had continued to increase in 2010. That trend was also linked to the entry into force of a new law in 2009 that allowed for refugee status and complementary protection to be granted to asylum-seekers.

71. In conjunction with UNHCR, Belarus was carrying out two technical assistance projects to bring its refugee-status determination procedures into line with international

standards. Further cooperation with UNHCR would help resolve problems related to statelessness and would facilitate the organization of training courses on UNHCR activities. An international research centre on migration and combating trafficking in persons had been established in Minsk in 2007.

72. During his visit to Belarus in July 2010, the High Commissioner had signed an agreement on bilateral cooperation with Belarus and on the legal status of the UNHCR local office and its staff. The implementation of the second phase of the UNHCR project for the integration of refugees in Belarus would be an important element in future cooperation. The Government was planning new projects to provide additional protection to victims of forced migration and to mobilize technical assistance to resolve problems related to statelessness.

73. **Ms. Lopicus** (Republic of Moldova) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

74. She noted that the Republic of Moldova had recently hosted a group of European experts to assess what steps should be taken to liberalize the country's visa regulations and was striving to achieve the goals outlined in the road map in that regard, in the context of wide-ranging efforts, supported by UNHCR, to comply with European standards.

75. Two projects to integrate refugees into society had been implemented. In the first, a laboratory had been established to test for diseases that were uncommon in the Republic of Moldova and, in the second, which had been carried out by the UNHCR office in Chisinau, a new building for single women and unaccompanied children had been constructed at the shelter for asylum-seekers. Another project, carried out with support from UNHCR, aimed at strengthening protection for refugees in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine through monitoring of the procedures for dealing with refugees at borders and at places of detention.

76. The Government had decided to extend the border surveillance project. Due to a lack of funds, the Republic of Moldova had not yet drawn up a long-term national strategy on integration projects. However, asylum issues remained a priority, and the authorities planned to draft a law on integration by the end of 2010. Accession by the Republic of Moldova to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness was a major objective of the National Action Plan 2010–2011. The Government furthermore worked with the European Union to resolve problems related to refugee travel documents, especially with regard to the inclusion of biometric data.

77. **Mr. Im Han-Taek** (South Korea) said he noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had mainstreamed results-based management in its operations and would soon complete the establishment of the Global Management Accountability Framework.

78. It was deplorable that even the most fundamental rights of refugees and asylum-seekers were not always respected and that, according to the UNHCR Global Appeal 2010–2011, cases of refoulement had been reported in at least 60 countries. Of particular concern was the persistent risk of refoulement facing refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He called upon the States concerned to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and expressed support for efforts by UNHCR to prevent refoulement through official and informal intervention.

79. He said that he wished to underscore the important role of UNHCR in helping States to address mixed migration using a rights-based approach. His country supported the development of the 10-Point Plan of Action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration.

80. He welcomed the involvement of UNHCR in activities to assist displaced persons and the Office's efforts to strengthen partnerships with other relevant agencies.

81. As the humanitarian space was shrinking, it was particularly encouraging that UNHCR was enhancing its cooperation with local partners, who often had better access to persons of concern and to local protection mechanisms. In April 2010, in cooperation with UNHCR, the Government had organized a subregional round table to discuss alternatives to holding refugees and asylum-seekers in detention.

82. **Mr. Holguín** (Ecuador) said that Ecuador hosted more refugees than any other country in Latin America, mostly as a result of major armed conflict in the neighbouring State of Colombia. To address that situation, support was needed from the world community and from the countries concerned. According to a study conducted with the support of UNHCR, in 2007, at least 135,000 Colombians in Ecuador required protection and approximately 50,000 of those persons had not been registered. The Government had initiated a one-year accelerated registration strategy in 2009 and, with assistance from UNHCR, new permanent registration offices were to be established. There were currently 52,878 persons in Ecuador who had been identified as requiring special international protection. Colombians represented 88 per cent of applicants and 98 per cent of recognized refugees.

83. With a view to their economic integration, Ecuador provided refugees with services, inter alia, in the areas of health, education and environmental protection, costing it tens of millions of dollars in recent years. Measures were needed to prevent serious social and humanitarian problems, particularly in the north of the country. In 2009, Ecuador, Colombia, and UNHCR had reintroduced a tripartite mechanism for channelling donations from Colombians to assist refugees. A study had also been conducted to identify the needs of Colombian refugees, including a voluntary repatriation programme. The introduction of the tripartite mechanism was of fundamental importance, because it was the method best suited to meeting the needs of Colombian refugees in Ecuador and to administering resources allocated for that purpose. Ecuador called upon UNHCR and the international community to support its efforts to integrate refugees into society, improve their standard of living and avert the risk of a major social crisis, particularly in border areas.

84. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said he agreed that temporary protection mechanisms were very important, especially in cases of major displacement of people from a neighbouring State, and noted that several Nordic countries had established temporary protection mechanisms for victims of natural disasters. He therefore encouraged all Member States to participate in developing a common approach to temporary protection.

85. Turning to the issue of asylum-seekers abusing the right to asylum, he said that displacement sometimes occurred, inter alia, because of economic factors, and that UNHCR attached great importance to ensuring that refugee status was only granted when certain rigorous criteria were met. Moreover, exclusion clauses should be applied to those involved in criminal activities or with links to terrorist organizations. UNHCR worked with INTERPOL to boost its own analytical capacity and prevent potential abuses. UNHCR also intended to cooperate with the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons and to base its action in that area on data provided by the Norwegian Refugee Council, which was widely recognized for its expertise. It would also participate in the conference on climate change and displacement that was due to be held in Norway to discuss, inter alia, the limitations of the protection regime.

86. Regional cooperation and the tripartite agreements between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi were of great importance and it was to be hoped that they would be extended to include Uganda and the Central African Republic. The agreements provided the most appropriate institutional framework for durable voluntary returns.

87. He welcomed the important legislative reforms that had been implemented by the Republic of the Congo and expressed his gratitude for the country's generosity in hosting refugees from neighbouring countries. In the framework of tripartite agreements, UNHCR would continue its efforts to support voluntary repatriation for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with the local integration programme for long-term refugees.

88. His recent mission to Belarus had allowed him to take stock of developments in the country's asylum system and to establish closer cooperation between UNHCR and Belarus, which was destined to play an increasingly important role, as it was on the transit route for population displacement. With assistance from UNHCR, Belarus was working to establish the strong institutional capacity that it required to address that situation.

89. Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and UNHCR was very important, especially in the context of refugee integration projects and the ongoing reforms that the country was carrying out in cooperation with the international community and the European Union.

90. Commending the Republic of Korea on its adoption of a more comprehensive asylum law, he said that he fully agreed with its position on non-refoulement, in particular with regard to refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He also welcomed the first cases of naturalization of Korean refugees, which had recently taken place.

91. He said that he commended Ecuador for its generosity in hosting refugees. UNHCR had cooperated with the Governments of Ecuador and Colombia on repatriation of the refugees and was aware that, given its economic situation and concerns about security on its borders, Ecuador required additional assistance from the international community.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.