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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee

Report of the 57th meeting of the Standing Committee (25-27 June 2013)*

Report of the Secretariat

* Late submission due to the adoption of the draft report during the fifty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee, which was held on 17-18 September 2013.

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Alicia Arango Olmos (Colombia), chaired the meeting on the first day. The subsequent days were chaired by the Vice Chairpersons, His Excellency Ambassador Zamir Akram (Pakistan) and His Excellency Ambassador Choi Seokyoung (Republic of Korea). During the meeting, Cuba, Kuwait and Sri Lanka were welcomed as new observers.

2. Before moving to the adoption of the agenda, the Chairperson provided an oral report on her recent field mission to Lebanon.

II. Adoption of the agenda

3. The agenda for the meeting (EC/64/SC/CRP.9) was adopted.

III. Adoption of the draft report of the 56th meeting of the Standing Committee

4. The report of the fifty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee (EC/64/SC/CRP.8) was adopted with the addition of a new paragraph under 3(e), reflected as paragraph 23 in the final version (A/AC.96/1121).

IV. International protection

A. Note on international protection

5. The Director of the Division of International Protection presented the *Note on international protection* (EC/64/SC/CRP.10). He emphasized that one of today's most urgent challenges was to maintain protection space by better supporting host States and communities in shouldering the burden of large-scale influxes. He also reminded delegations that behind the staggering number of displaced persons were a multitude of human faces and the local communities that host them.

6. Nearly 40 delegations took the floor in response. Many voiced strong support for host countries in general, and especially those hosting Syrian refugees, recognizing the tremendous burden these countries were bearing. At the same time, concern was expressed that the strain of hosting refugees had at times led some countries to restrict access to asylum through border closures and other policies, and that there had been incidents of *refoulement*. Member States encouraged UNHCR to strengthen its capacity to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGVB). Also emphasized was the need to strengthen protection interventions on behalf of internally displaced persons (IDPs), ensure the humanitarian nature of asylum and address the protection needs of urban refugees.

7. Member States urged UNHCR to continue its work on durable solutions, noting that protracted situations should not be overlooked because of the urgent need to respond to emergencies. The Office was encouraged to strengthen cooperation with development actors, not only in protracted situations but also in emergencies. Emergency planning should lay the foundation for sustainable solutions to avoid creating protracted situations. Some delegations emphasized the importance of local integration and resettlement in developing comprehensive solutions strategies, while others stressed that repatriation was the preferred solution.

8. A number of States reported progress towards implementing pledges made at the 2011 Ministerial Intergovernmental Event and encouraged other governments to follow through on their commitments. The importance of civil registration, including birth registration, as a protection tool was reiterated and welcomed as the topic for this year's Executive Committee conclusion on international protection. Delegations also expressed support for the theme of the High Commissioner's 2013 Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which will focus on internally displaced persons (IDPs).

9. The Director summed up the discussion, noting a number of recurring themes, including (i) support for the principle of burden-sharing in guiding the international protection framework; (ii) affirmation of the principle of *non-refoulement* as the cornerstone of international protection; and (iii) concurrence that strong protection systems and partnerships were necessary to address the increasingly complex security concerns and protection needs of persons of concern. He emphasized that protection cannot be achieved in isolation, and that it required good governance and civil society partnerships. The Director expressed appreciation for member States' support of UNHCR's work and concluded with a renewed call for strengthened international cooperation and solidarity.

B. Note on statelessness

10. The Head of the Statelessness Unit presented the *Note on statelessness* (EC/64/SC/CRP.11). He described the progress made in addressing statelessness over the past two years as unprecedented, particularly in relation to pledges made by States at the 2011 Ministerial Intergovernmental Event and the subsequent follow-up. He added that the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in 2014 would provide another opportunity for UNHCR to achieve its broader objectives relating to statelessness, including by highlighting the human impact of the problem.

11. A number of delegations took the floor to provide updates on progress made by their own governments, including reform of nationality laws, the development of stateless determination procedures, the provision of birth certificates to at-risk populations, the sharing of good practices among States and the improvement of data collection. Support was expressed for the High Commissioner's call to eradicate statelessness within 10 years.

12. Noting the impact of nationality laws that discriminate against women in their right to transmit nationality to their children on an equal basis as men, one delegation urged UNHCR to build on recent research in this area and to work with governments and civil society on legal reform. Another delegation raised the importance of adequate staffing and resources to address statelessness, even while coping with large-scale emergencies, noting the strong link between protracted statelessness situations and displacement. UNHCR was asked to keep the Committee informed about the impact of the five new regional statelessness staff positions.

13. The Head of the Statelessness Unit expressed appreciation for the updates on pledges made by States and hoped that this would become a regular practice, including at the annual session of the Executive Committee in October. He suggested that States which were advanced in their domestic accession procedures may use the annual treaty event during the opening of the General Assembly in New York to deposit their instruments.

C. Update on refugee women: promoting gender equality and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence

14. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection, responsible for protection operational support, presented the *Update on refugee women* (EC/64/SC/CRP.12), focusing on efforts to promote gender equality and combat SGBV.

15. The Committee welcomed UNHCR's continued emphasis on achieving gender equality, through its age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach. Gender equality was repeatedly referenced as critical for protection and the achievement of solutions. Many States supported the emphasis placed on strengthening women's participation in decision-making processes and leadership structures. Inclusion of community empowerment as a Global Strategic Priority was welcomed. One delegation suggested that collaboration with the private sector could help improve conditions for refugee women and their self-reliance.

16. A number of concerns were raised including the need for greater attention to persons with disabilities in UNHCR's programming, addressing the low rates of enrolment in education for refugee girls and adolescents, and the implementation of UNHCR's SGBV strategy in a clear and structured manner in operations around the world. UNHCR was asked to provide an update on implementation of the strategy in relation to populations at risk, including children; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, and persons with disabilities. Finally, one delegation pointed to the fact that refugee women were exposed to double discrimination, as a result of both gender and displacement, and that they deserved a double commitment from the international community in response.

17. The Deputy Director assured the Committee that UNHCR shared their concerns and appreciated the fact that so many delegations were closely tracking progress made in implementation of the strategies. She described various initiatives being undertaken to implement the SGBV strategy, including staff training and launching of a monitoring and evaluation framework. She also spoke about the linkages being made between the SGBV strategy and the child protection framework. The Deputy Director explained that UNHCR was examining how to deepen and standardize its participatory assessment methodology, and briefed delegations on the new participatory assessment tool developed for children, called "listen and learn." With respect to education, she reminded delegations that this was the top concern expressed by refugee women during the regional dialogues held in 2010 and noted that, while efforts had led to increased enrolment of children in primary school, challenges remained including with respect to enrolment in secondary education.

D. Oral update on the Executive Committee conclusion theme

18. The Executive Committee Rapporteur reported on the informal preparatory consultations on the Executive Committee Conclusion on international protection, noting that eight consultations had already been held since the negotiations began in May and that much work remained to be done. He highlighted the fact that the theme of the conclusion, civil registration, had been put forward by the group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC) and adopted by consensus. A number of delegations took the floor to express support for the theme and encourage all States to demonstrate the necessary flexibility so that consensus could be achieved. One Member State pointed out that ultimate objective was to help those affected. The Rapporteur also reminded delegations that the adoption of conclusions on international protection was an important means for the Committee in carrying out its advisory role. He thanked Member States for their support thus far and called for their continued constructiveness and commitment.

V. Programme/protection policy

A. Community-based protection

19. The Senior Protection Coordinator, covering protection operational support in the Division of International Protection, introduced the report on *Community-based protection* (EC/64/SC/CRP.14).

20. Delegations welcomed the emphasis UNHCR was placing on strengthening community involvement in decision-making, pointing out the important role that communities can play in offering valuable insight and serving as an enabler. Expanding community buy-in to programming, particularly in sensitive areas such as SGBV prevention, was important. One delegation suggested that UNHCR close the participatory loop by providing systematic feedback to communities. Positive note was also made of UNHCR's efforts to hold staff, including senior management, accountable for ensuring that communities were involved in protection programming.

21. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the candid report on the review of the field-based protection workforce and welcomed the adjustments proposed, including merging the community services and protection functions. Others pointed to the significant differences in skills sets between community services and protection staff and queried how UNHCR would address this issue. Several States asked to be kept informed of progress made.

22. The Senior Protection Coordinator emphasized that the Community Services and Protection Officer functions were linked to core protection work, and that the aim of the workforce review was to ground protection work more firmly in communities. She noted the request for UNHCR to keep the Committee informed of progress made.

B. Update on the global strategic priorities

23. Presenting conference room paper (EC/64/SC/CRP.13/Rev.1), the Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management updated the Committee on implementation of the Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs) for 2012-2013 and presented the GSPs for 2014-2015, which had benefited from discussion with the Executive Committee during an informal consultative meeting earlier in the year.

24. More than twenty delegations took the floor to comment on the GSPs. They conveyed appreciation for being included in the consultation process with respect to the GSPs for the coming biennium. Comments addressed the need to: include returnees under the GSP on durable solutions; ensure a balance across the GSPs reflecting UNHCR's core functions of protection and solutions; engage both host communities and people of concern in programme design and implementation; elevate solutions to protracted refugee situations as a priority; include urban refugees and persons with disabilities in the GSPs; provide adequate attention to coordination in the support and management GSPs; and enhance consultations with member States. There were also a number of questions, including with respect to the impact of earmarking on the GSPs and expenditure for each.

25. The Director expressed appreciation for the extensive engagement of Committee members on this issue, noting their agreement with the need to ensure the coherence, continuity and manageability of the GSPs. He took note of the wide range of suggestions made and provided detailed responses. In particular, he stated that UNHCR was working on overcoming challenges in linking budgetary information to the GSPs, and promised to revert to the Committee on this issue. Responding to the concern that extending the scope of the GSPs might have budgetary consequences, the Director observed that the new impact indicators had been drawn from the results framework and were therefore already reflected in budgets and planning. While the programmatic areas covered by the GSP indicators may draw additional funding, the purpose of the GSPs was to guide prioritization within available resources. Regarding specific groups of persons of concern, he underscored that their not being explicitly named in the GSPs did not mean they were not receiving attention in programming.

C. Staff safety and security issues, including refugee security

26. The Coordinator of the Emergency Capacity Management Service (ECMS) presented the paper on *Staff safety and security issues, including refugee security* (EC/64/SC/CRP.15), briefing the Committee on achievements made to strengthen the culture of security within UNHCR.

27. States paid tribute to UNHCR staff, not only those who lost their lives but also those who risked their own safety to help others. They praised UNHCR's efforts to develop a more holistic approach to security and were pleased to see a change in the approach to risk management. Concern was expressed about the safety of national organizations, which did not have the same means to protect their staff, including against retaliation. UNHCR was encouraged to ensure greater information-sharing with and involvement of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the United Nations security management system.

28. The physical security of refugees was also highlighted as a serious concern. While host governments had a primary role to ensure the safety and security of refugees on their territory, UNHCR's programming also helped mitigate risks, including for example with respect to camp location and design.

29. In response, the Chief of the Field Safety Section described efforts to ensure information-sharing between the United Nations Security Management System and NGO partners through the "Saving Lives Together" initiative. He also underlined the importance of working with communities and outlined the challenges of doing so in areas with extremist elements. The Coordinator of ECMS described efforts being undertaken to ensure the physical security of refugees, including increasing coordination with government counterparts, and reconfirmed UNHCR's commitment to addressing this issue.

VI. Regional activities and global programmes: technical integrity of UNHCR programmes

30. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management presented the report on the *Technical integrity of UNHCR programmes* (see EC/64/SC/CRP.16), covering the areas of public health; HIV/AIDS; food security and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); shelter and settlements; the environment; and livelihoods and solutions. He highlighted the challenges associated with ensuring technical integrity and quality in UNHCR's diverse operations and efforts made to develop global strategies, operational guidance and practical tools, as well as to ensure expertise in technical areas both within UNHCR and through its partnerships.

31. Delegations welcomed the strategic plans being developed in technical areas of intervention and encouraged deepened partnerships to strengthen programme implementation. They also highlighted the importance of UNHCR building its own internal capacity and expertise. There were numerous questions, including on how UNHCR would ensure coherence and consistency across guidance documents, and how the process of simplification was being reflected in the ambit of technical integrity.

32. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management noted that monitoring and evaluation frameworks were being developed to measure results in technical areas. He acknowledged that UNHCR needed to develop and maintain internal core capacity in technical areas, but stressed that the organization would continue to rely on standby partners. Regarding the involvement of field colleagues and partners in the elaboration of technical strategies, he noted that this underpinned the current methodology. The Deputy Director of the Division added that a bottom-up approach to the elaboration of guidance was followed.

33. The Deputy High Commissioner addressed two efforts undertaken by UNHCR in regard to simplified knowledge management: 1) standardizing forms of communication within the organization, and 2) streamlining the volume of existing guidelines by clarifying UNHCR's policies and making them more easily accessible online.

VII. Programme budgets and funding

A. Update on budgets and funding for 2013 and reporting on 2012

34. The Deputy High Commissioner introduced the item on programme budgets and funding, thanking host and donor countries alike for their valuable support. He highlighted the growing gap between needs and funding as well as the challenges involved in re-prioritization of scarce resources. He noted the efforts made by UNHCR to ensure efficiency and reach new donors, including in the private sector, but at the same time urged governments to do everything possible to close the gap.

35. The *Update on budgets and funding for 2013 and reporting on 2012* (EC/64/SC/CRP.17) was presented jointly by the Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, and the Director of the Division of External Relations. Their presentation included a review of the 2012 financial situation, an overview of the current financial needs, including supplementary budgets for new emergency interventions, and an update on the current funding situation, including fundraising activities.

36. Delegations recognized the enormous resource challenges faced by UNHCR in light of the increasing number and scale of emergencies in 2012 and 2013. They shared concern about the gap between identified needs and available resources, and encouraged UNHCR to approach new donors and the private sector in order to have a fully financed budget. A number of countries urged all donors to limit earmarking to allow UNHCR maximum flexibility.

37. The issue of transparency was a key theme reiterated by numerous delegations during the discussion. UNHCR was encouraged to provide consolidated reporting on where key funding shortfalls lie. One delegation pointed out that States were only informed about the allocation of resources in retrospect and requested that UNHCR update the Committee on the state of affairs earlier on in the process. While acknowledging the importance of needs-based budgeting, which served as a useful tool for communicating resource requirements to donors, a number of delegations encouraged the Office to better demonstrate the results achieved based on funding provided.

38. Responding to a number of questions on prioritization, the Deputy High Commissioner provided greater detail on the budgeting and allocation process, as well as on the constraints imposed by the earmarking of funds. He addressed questions related to the "carry-over," which was a structural part of budget, allowing UNHCR to continue operations from one year to another without interruptions in programme delivery. He emphasized that this did not represent under-implementation. With a dramatic growth in the budget, the Deputy High Commissioner explained the measures that were being taken to strengthen financial management and control, including additional positions in financial management and project control, the upgrade of telecommunications infrastructure, and introduction of enterprise risk management. UNHCR's enterprise resource planning system, MSRP, was also being upgraded.

39. The Controller noted that programmatic performance was covered in the Global Report and that increased efforts had been made this year to report on the impact of the financial gap between the budget and funds received. The Director of the Division of

External Relations emphasized the importance of unearmarked contributions and predictable funding, including through multi-year contributions.

40. At the end of the discussion of this sub-item, the Committee adopted a decision on budgets and funding for 2012 and 2013, as contained in the annex.

B. Global Report on activities in 2012

41. The Director of the Division of External Relations presented the Global Report on UNHCR's work in 2012. He noted that the report, which provided a comprehensive overview of UNHCR's work worldwide. The Director highlighted a number of improvements that had been made, based on comments received from donors, and invited delegations to continue providing feedback on how to make the report more relevant to their needs.

42. Delegates welcomed the report as a key tool used by their governments and commended the efforts that had been made to strengthen it. Areas cited for future improvement were reporting on clear outputs and outcomes, providing age and gender-aggregated data, and consolidated reporting on contributions of host countries, among others. The Director concluded with words of appreciation for the comments from the floor and noted their suggestions.

VIII. Coordination

A. Update on HIV/AIDS and refugees

43. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management presented the *Update on HIV/AIDS and refugees* (EC/64/SC/CRP.18), highlighting the unique challenges associated with ensuring continued treatment and access to care for refugee populations and emphasizing UNHCR's work with governments to include refugees in their national HIV/AIDS programmes. He also provided an update on the main achievements resulting from its partnership with the World Food Programme in the UNAIDS division of labour area "addressing HIV in humanitarian emergencies," since the last report to the Committee.

44. Member States expressed support for the strong focus on results and outcomes in UNHCR's programming and the steady increase in coverage and quality of HIV interventions in both emergencies and protracted situations. They emphasized the importance of prevention and the implementation of HIV/AIDS programmes from the onset of emergencies. UNHCR was encouraged to continue expanding access to post-exposure prophylaxis, and concern was expressed about the low rate of operations in meeting the target for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission. One delegation also raised concern about possible use of detention, *refoulement* and denial of access to territory for people who are or suspected of being HIV positive.

45. The Director assured member States that UNHCR attaches great importance to its partnerships and UNAIDS Co-sponsor role. He highlighted the importance of partnerships with governments, noting that the objective is not to have parallel programmes but rather to work with them to ensure that refugees have equal access to anti-retroviral treatments equivalent to that of the local population.

B. Elements for UNHCR's oral update to the 2013 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

46. The Director of the Division of External Relations briefed the Committee on UNHCR's upcoming oral update on coordination and partnerships during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, identifying four key themes as follows: responding to emergencies; transition efforts, protracted situations and durable solutions; UNHCR's implementation of the Transformative Agenda; and partnership and coordination with non-governmental organizations. Consistent with the practice of past years, there was no debate on this sub-item, although delegations were invited to submit comments or questions in writing to the Office through the Secretary.

IX. Governance

47. The Committee was reminded that the High Commissioner's opening statement at the forthcoming sixty-fourth plenary session of the Executive Committee would form the basis of discussion for the session's general debate. Proposals for topics were invited.

48. Member States suggested the following: competing priorities between responding to emergencies and finding durable solutions; UNHCR's role in humanitarian reform and the Transformative Agenda; impact of budgetary shortfall on beneficiaries and host communities; and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, including prevention and response to SGBV. The Committee was invited to submit any further proposals in writing to the Secretary.

X. Any other business

49. The Secretary of the Executive Committee provided delegations with a fourth update on the development of the 10-year strategic review of the Office, which would be submitted by the High Commissioner to the General Assembly, in conformity with A/58/153, along with his traditional annual report. He thanked delegations for the feedback they had provided on the report during the most recent consultations, held on 21 June 2013. The Secretary noted that the report was now being finalized and expressed appreciation to the Committee for its valuable support of the process.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2012 and 2013

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its sixty-third session on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1119, para.13) as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the fifty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2012,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

1. Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-second session, approved programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's 2012-2013 Biennial Programme Budget amounting to \$3,591.2 million for 2012;
2. Recalls that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-third session, approved programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's revised 2012-2013 Biennial Programme Budget amounting to \$3,924.2 million for 2013;
3. Notes that the 2012 supplementary budgets amount to \$692.7 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;
4. Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's 2012 annual budget to a total of \$4,255.6 million;
5. Notes that the 2013 supplementary budgets currently amount to \$544.8 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;
6. Notes the reduction of \$2.5 million in the Mali situation for 2013;
7. Takes note of the increase in UNHCR's 2013 annual budget to a total of \$4,466.5 million;
8. Recognizes that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2013 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets, and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs; and
9. Urges member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the 2013 annual budget.