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## Third Committee

### Summary record of the 40th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 November 2014, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Mesquita Borges . . . . . (Timor-Leste)

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

**Agenda item 61: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions** (A/69/12, A/69/12/Add.1 and A/69/339)

1. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that global forced displacement had been rising steadily in recent years, with over 51 million people experiencing situations of displacement in 2013. Given the increasing number of conflicts around the world, as well as the pressures resulting from climate change, population growth, urbanization, food insecurity and water scarcity, the upward trend was expected to continue. The growing needs had outpaced the recent increases in funding. The humanitarian system was close to bankruptcy and would be unable to respond adequately. Although the humanitarian community would continue to partner with emerging donors and expand cooperation with the private sector, those measures would not be enough to address the shortfall. The fundamental relationship between humanitarian and development funding must be reviewed. The total international budget for humanitarian assistance was equivalent to just 10 per cent of the amount available for development cooperation. Yet, in the context of multiplying conflicts, development funds were often not accessible quickly enough and humanitarian actors were forced to compensate for the lack of structural assistance.

2. Development agencies, donors and international financial institutions must work together to increase flexibility and complementarity between short- and longer-term activities and be present on the ground from the beginning of crises. Strong political leadership would be needed to change the objectives, priorities and organizational culture of development cooperation. It was also essential to think more creatively about funding. For example, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had commissioned a study to explore the potential modalities of a system whereby assessed contributions would be used to fund a large central emergency response fund, or “super-CERF”, for level 3 emergencies.

3. Another important factor was the need to replace the current multilateral humanitarian system, which was essentially a Western creation, with a universal partnership capable of drawing on all available efforts

and resources. While many refugee-hosting countries had not signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Refugee Convention), their actual policies reflected a generosity towards people seeking protection that was deeply rooted in their traditions and beliefs. For example, modern international refugee law reflected many tenets of Islamic tradition and law. He hoped that the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit would advance a truly universal approach to the expression of humanitarian values and principles and respect for the humanitarian space.

4. There were several situations that required immediate action. Syrian refugees were now the largest refugee population under the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). That crisis was also greatly affecting the economies, public services, communities and populations of other countries in the region, particularly Lebanon and Jordan. Most critically, Iraq had become engulfed by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2014, hundreds of thousands of Syrians had sought refuge in the Kurdistan region, while more than 1.9 million Iraqis had been internally displaced in 2014 and an additional 180,000 had fled abroad.

5. The recent massive displacements in Africa posed the largest challenge for UNHCR in terms of financial requirements and capacity. In the Central African Republic, some 410,000 people remained internally displaced and over 420,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries. In South Sudan, 1.4 million people were internally displaced and 467,000 had fled to Ethiopia, Uganda, the Sudan and Kenya since December 2013. Continued insecurity in northern Nigeria had resulted in 650,000 internally displaced persons and 54,000 refugees in Cameroon and Niger. While some Malian refugees were returning to their home country, 140,000 remained in Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso and insecurity remained an enormous challenge in Mali. The conflict in Libya had displaced an estimated 287,000 persons within the country, while increased boat departures towards Europe had led to a rising number of deaths at sea.

6. The situation in Ukraine had led to the internal displacement of 442,000 people, while 213,000 had applied for legal protection in the Russian Federation and 8,000 in other European countries. In addition to the new emergency situations, the protracted conflicts in Afghanistan, Somalia and other countries continued

to require the limited attention and resources of humanitarian agencies.

7. Emergency response had been the defining priority for the humanitarian community in 2014, with five system-wide level 3 emergencies putting an unprecedented strain on most organizations. Staff safety measures and investment in security management remained a priority for UNHCR in many operations, as more than 80 humanitarian workers, including one UNHCR staff member, had died since the beginning of 2014.

8. Humanitarian refugee protection currently depended on three pillars of support: host countries and communities, donors and partners. Most crucially, the institution of asylum was still preserved and respected by the vast majority of States. Despite the shortfall in assistance, developing countries hosted 86 per cent of the world's refugees, as compared to 70 per cent in 2004. International solidarity and burden-sharing by wealthier States was needed to support those host States with limited resources.

9. With regard to donor support, voluntary contributions to UNHCR had reached unprecedented levels, with donations expected to exceed \$3 billion in 2014. Some of those generous commitments had come from new donors and the private sector. Maximizing the effectiveness of limited funding, partly through measures aimed at proportionally reducing structural costs, would continue to be a priority for UNHCR. Thanks to its efforts to increase efficiency in recent years, the volume of operations had increased threefold, with only a 30 per cent increase in staff worldwide, and with a 30 per cent reduction of staff in Geneva. The main focus was shifting to oversight and accountability.

10. With regard to partnerships, UNHCR continued to cooperate with development actors in order to ensure humanitarian and development efforts were complementary from the moment displacement occurred. Its current focus was on further strengthening collaboration with the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other United Nations agencies as well as implementing the recommendations of its structured dialogue with non-governmental organizations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In order to stabilize the situation of displaced Syrians and make both host communities and refugees more resilient in

the long term, UNHCR had been working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to find ways of combining humanitarian and development assistance. That vision underpinned the regional refugee and resilience plan coordinated by UNHCR and UNDP that would be launched in December 2014 by host Governments and over 150 partners. UNHCR also maintained its strong support for the implementation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Transformative Agenda. In late 2013, it had issued its refugee coordination model, which aimed to provide a straightforward, systematic and inclusive reference point for host Governments and partners and allow for flexibility in situations involving both refugees and internally displaced persons. Its cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was particularly valued in that context.

11. Priority areas under the UNCHR protection mandate included statelessness, protection at sea and the protection of women and children. Progress on dealing with statelessness was encouraging. There had been 42 accessions to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness since 2011, and an increasing number of States were changing their nationality laws so as to end statelessness. Nevertheless, at least 10 million people remained stateless. UNHCR had launched a global campaign to end statelessness within 10 years in November 2014 and was counting on strong support from Member States to achieve that ambitious goal.

12. Every week, hundreds of people in search of protection attempted to cross the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden or the Bay of Bengal in unsafe boats, placing their lives in the hands of smugglers. The recent increase in irregular maritime movements posed complex challenges for the States involved, including issues such as rescue and disembarkation, proper reception conditions, fair treatment of protection claims and the need for more regional cooperation and burden-sharing among affected countries. He looked forward to discussing those issues with Member States, civil society and other stakeholders at the annual High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

13. Lastly, the UNHCR approach to dealing with the dramatically increasing number of refugee children and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, who faced higher risks of becoming victims of sexual exploitation or abuse, child labour and early marriage, was to focus

on access to quality education, psychosocial care and birth registration. Targeted support was also offered to children with specific needs. Efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence were increasingly being linked to child protection and education issues. Progress had been made in implementing the UNHCR global strategy to strengthen the response to sexual and gender-based violence, but relatively little had been achieved worldwide with regard to combatting impunity and supporting victims.

14. Implementing sustainable solutions remained the most challenging aspect of the UNHCR mandate. The recent creation of the Solutions Alliance, comprising many Governments, humanitarian and development organizations, had been an encouraging step, as it was clear that comprehensive initiatives had the best chances of success. There had been encouraging progress in Africa, including the voluntary return operation for the remaining 30,000 Angolan refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the local integration of Angolans in Zambia, the comprehensive solutions strategy for Rwandan refugees and the naturalization programme in the United Republic of Tanzania for long-standing Burundian refugees. The UNHCR Global Initiative on Somali Refugees would help achieve real improvements for that group, while the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees adopted by six Governments in the region sought to maintain and improve the asylum space. Ethiopia's "out-of-camp" policy and its programme providing university scholarships for refugees were particularly noteworthy.

15. Under the comprehensive Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, the Governments of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran had provided proof of registration cards and increased access to education and work permits for refugees, among other measures. He hoped that the Strategy would become a key national priority under the new Afghan Government in order to make voluntary repatriation to safer areas more attractive and sustainable. The Government of Ecuador was implementing a comprehensive solution for Colombian refugees focused on livelihood opportunities, while Latin American Governments would soon adopt an action plan that would give new impetus to enhancing protection and solutions across the region.

16. UNCHR innovations included the provision of cash assistance to refugees, which enabled them to make their own choices while also supporting local economies. It had also recently issued a policy on alternatives to camps. While implementation would be defined within the framework of national law, it was hoped that the policy would help Governments explore alternatives that allowed refugees to contribute to their countries of asylum and enable them to lead more dignified and productive lives.

17. The most important way to avoid a complete failure of the humanitarian response system was through the prevention of conflicts. That was essentially a question of finding the international political resolve to address the root causes of displacement, a responsibility that fell outside the scope of humanitarian action. Although efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts must be led by the States concerned, much stronger international assistance was also required, including increased support for national, regional and international mediation and stabilization efforts. In the absence of political will and foresight, conflicts either continued endlessly at tremendous cost or ended in compromises that could have been reached without violence. Many of the other fundamental challenges to human society, including climate change and the spread of the Ebola virus, could only be addressed through a commitment on the part of political leaders to work together. Humanitarian action would never be sufficient; the real solution must be a political solution.

18. **Mr. Al-Obaidi** (Iraq) said that his Government continued to work with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to support displaced Iraqis and was grateful to UNHCR for the assistance it provided to Iraqis who had been displaced owing to attacks by the terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). His Government continued to provide support for Syrian refugees in Iraq. He asked how Governments and international partners could best coordinate in order to help displaced persons.

19. **Ms. Belskaya** (Belarus) said that the number of petitions to her Government from refugees and displaced persons had increased tenfold over the past months. It would continue to make considerable efforts to provide access to education and medical services, employment and financial assistance to those in need. She asked what measures UNHCR, together with other United Nations agencies and partners, was planning to

take in order to reach a solution to the situation in the Middle East, in particular in Iraq.

20. **Ms. Pucarinho** (Portugal) said that the High Commissioner's guidance on how the United Nations system could better address the large number of refugees and internally displaced persons, heightened security risks and the constriction of humanitarian space was welcome. In that regard, she asked how United Nations agencies, Member States and regional organizations could more effectively address the challenges related to the protection of forcibly displaced persons in the context of unpredictable, constantly changing conflicts and what mechanisms could be improved to enable UNHCR to better respond to the specific needs of internally displaced persons, given that, unlike refugees, they did not have a distinct status under international law.

21. **Mr. Musa** (Sudan) thanked the High Commissioner for his most recent visit to the Sudan. The country had received more than 180,000 refugees, most of them women and children, since the outbreak of the conflict in South Sudan. While his Government had instructed that those refugees should be treated as citizens, it did not have the capacity to provide for all of their needs; assistance from the international community and other donors for the provision of health services and shelter was urgently needed. His Government's continued efforts had resulted in stability and peace in many areas of Darfur, which had encouraged a number of refugees who had been living in eastern Chad to spontaneously return, primarily to West Darfur. The rehabilitation of infrastructure and services must continue in order to facilitate spontaneous return. While the contributions of Member States for the resettlement of refugees was much appreciated, an increase in their quotas and the simplification of procedures to access funds would do much to facilitate durable solutions. Lastly, he thanked UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the African Union for their participation in the regional conference to combat human trafficking and smuggling in the Horn of Africa, which had held in October 2014 in the Sudan. His Government looked forward to the adoption of the Khartoum Declaration and the implementation of its recommendations.

22. **Mr. Diaz Carazo** (Observer for the European Union) said that his delegation shared the concerns of UNHCR regarding the unprecedented rise in the number of displaced persons and welcomed the

Office's increased cooperation with Governments and other partners. It was important to recognize that while refugees presented challenges to host States, they could also make an important contribution to communities and the local and national economies. In that context, and in the absence of political solutions, the European Union was working to bring development and humanitarian actors closer together in order to increase the self-reliance and livelihood opportunities of displaced persons. He asked the High Commissioner to articulate the greatest obstacles to scaling-up such initiatives, as they were not accessible to many refugees. His delegation would also appreciate more information on planned cost-efficiency measures to reduce expenditures at UNHCR in the light of the limited resources. His delegation supported the Office's increased efforts to work with partners to ensure displaced persons were better protected as well as the adoption by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the statement on the centrality of protection in humanitarian settings in December 2013. It welcomed the recent launch of the UNHCR education strategy and wondered what other policies could be implemented to deal with the dramatic rise in the global number of refugee children.

23. **Mr. Minami** (Japan) said that his Government had long supported UNHCR and affirmed the importance of protecting its mandate. The gap between financing for development work and financing for humanitarian efforts was a long-standing issue which the international community had attempted to remedy since the 1990s, including through the establishment of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Central Emergency Response Fund. In that regard, his delegation asked the High Commissioner to comment on the relationship between UNHCR and the Office and the function of the Fund. It would also welcome information on the UNHCR strategy and timeline for addressing the financing gap in the context of the opportunities offered by the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations in 2015, the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Lastly, he asked the High Commissioner to clarify the efforts Member States should undertake to fill the need for political leadership.

24. **Mr. Kebret** (Ethiopia) said that, as host to 643,000 refugees, Ethiopia experienced first-hand the gap between the UNHCR mandate and the funds at its

disposal. In line with his Government's open-door policy, which was based not only on its treaty obligations but also on a long-standing national tradition, Ethiopia would continue to receive refugees fleeing armed conflict and persecution. While his Government would never resort to refoulement, it was obligated to receive refugees in a way that did not affect its own communities by harming the environment, compromising security or, most critically, putting excessive pressure on resources. Adequate resources must be allocated to refugee-hosting States, including in country programme budgets. He asked the High Commissioner for his views on that matter. His delegation commended the High Commissioner on the new Global Initiative on Somali Refugees and would welcome any updates on activities relating to the adoption of the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees

25. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her Government was grateful for the assistance provided by UNHCR to care for displaced people in the country and Syrian refugees in neighbouring regions. At the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, her delegation had drawn his attention to reports by United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, and non-governmental organizations indicating a lack of security in camps hosting Syrian refugees in neighbouring States. There had been widespread incidents of theft, rape, child labour, forced marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons, facilitated by persons overseeing the camps and by local non-governmental organizations. Children living in the camps had also been recruited to fight for armed terrorist groups in the Syrian Arab Republic after being brainwashed with extremist ideas and takfirist ideology. Yet the High Commissioner's report made no mention of those grave matters. She asked what measures the High Commissioner, as the person responsible for the security of those camps, had taken in cooperation with host Governments to put an end to those violations of the rights of Syrian refugees.

26. Given that the United Nations had recognized the existence of terrorism in her country, her delegation would be interested to hear whether the High Commissioner intended to refer to the presence of armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic in his future statements and reports, as they were the primary cause of the displacement of Syrians. Lastly, she noted that the funds allocated to the UNHCR response plan in

neighbouring countries was double the amount allocated for the response in her country and asked how the High Commissioner intended to deal with that contradiction. It was well known that the needs within the country were far greater than in refugee camps, as the majority of displaced Syrians were living in urban areas in their country at their own expense.

27. **Ms. Klemetsdal** (Norway) said that her Government commended the UNHCR focus on protection issues, in particular its call to protect the growing number of refugee children and its efforts to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence in camps and host communities. She asked how the international community could better strategically prevent and tackle the challenges posed by the multiple level 3 emergencies, protracted crises and record number of internally displaced persons. Noting that the plight of internally displaced persons was attracting ever less international attention, despite the fact that their number had reached a historical peak of more than 33 million in 2013, she wondered how that issue could be prioritized on the international agenda and whether there were appropriate means and systems in place to do so.

28. **Mr. Chir** (Algeria) said that Algeria was host to Sahrawi refugees, more than 23,500 Syrian refugees and large numbers of refugees from Mali, Niger, Libya and other sub-Saharan countries. His delegation welcomed the information provided by UNHCR on the efforts to bring Algeria's national legislation on asylum seekers in line with international standards. It supported the High Commissioner's assertion that humanitarian and development aid could not be a substitute for political solutions. Regarding comprehensive solutions in protracted situations, his delegation would be interested to hear about the recommendations proposed by the Solutions Steering Group.

29. **Ms. Clifford** (Sweden) said that the High Commissioner had been a strong advocate for the institution of asylum and the provision assistance in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention, while at the same time calling for durable political solutions. Her Government supported his call for solidarity and for innovative approaches to deal with the growing numbers of displaced people. Sweden continued to firmly support UNHCR both financially and politically and maintained one of the most generous asylum policies in Europe. Her Government would continue to

call for more States to open their borders in solidarity with refugees and the host countries most affected by the current humanitarian crises.

30. Her delegation wished to know what actions could be taken by individual Member States and collectively to increase resettlement and improve temporary protection policies for refugees. It would also like to hear what concrete outcomes of the upcoming humanitarian summits the High Commissioner expected to have the most significant impact on the work of UNHCR. She noted that Member States had added a number of new substantial items to the draft resolution, coordinated by Sweden, under the current agenda item; they included statements that supported the High Commissioner's call to action on statelessness and the refugee coordination model; highlighted the impact of food ration cuts in Africa and the Middle East; and emphasized the need for stronger partnerships with development actors.

31. **Mr. Deng** (South Sudan) said that conflict was once again generating refugee flows and massive internal displacements in his country. While his Government appreciated how UNHCR had opened up its camps to protect internally displaced persons, the conditions were dreadful and the means to address them sorely limited. The focus, therefore, was on encouraging people to return home, if it was safe, or to relocate to a State that was not a conflict zone. The question was how the international community should address the situation of internally displaced persons, who usually were not a priority, and, for whom, unlike refugees, there was no legal or institutional means of obtaining assistance. In his former capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for internally displaced persons, he had proposed three options: establishing a new agency for internally displaced persons; assigning responsibility for internally displaced persons to an existing agency; or collaboration. As the latter option had been selected, it would be interesting to know how it was working. He also asked whether the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), which provided useful guidelines, had any prospects of being adopted globally.

32. **Mr. Mažeiks** (Latvia) asked what immediate steps needed to be taken to find a long-term solution for the 430,000 internally displaced persons in

Ukraine, whose rights and freedoms were being seriously limited by the situation. In particular, he asked what support UNHCR was providing in preparation for what was expected to be a harsh winter.

33. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea) said that the High Commissioner's report (A/69/12) had not mentioned the serious possibility that the populations of small island developing States in the South Pacific would be displaced as a result of climate change and rising sea levels and asked whether UNHCR was analysing the issue. He further asked for the High Commissioner's views on the issue of the asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, which was also not mentioned in the report. Finally, he wished to know how the High Commissioner proposed to move forward with the proposal to use assessed contributions to fund the work of UNHCR.

34. **Mr. Lynn** (Myanmar) asked how cooperation with United Nations agencies and other international organizations could be intensified to better address human trafficking in the Bay of Bengal region.

35. **Mr. Tesfay** (Eritrea) asked what mechanisms UNHCR had for distinguishing between migrants and refugees, given that both sometimes ended up in the same camps or reception centres. He also asked what mechanisms UNHCR had for protecting refugees from being exploited by armed or political groups who used camps to recruit or agitate.

36. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the generosity shown by the Iraqi people towards refugees was an example for the rest of the world. In the midst of its own dramatic situation, Iraq was hosting over 200,000 Syrian refugees. With the formation of the new Government in Baghdad, the conditions were in place to strengthen coordination at the national level between the Government, United Nations agencies and other actors, while continuing activities at the regional level. UNHCR would continue to find ways to protect both refugees and internally displaced persons in Iraq. UNHCR would also increase its presence in Belarus if the numbers of refugees it received so required.

37. To avoid the bankruptcy of the refugee crisis response system, the international community's capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts must improve. That capacity had been weakened by changes in traditional power relations that had increased the unpredictability of events. Solutions depended on

stronger cooperation between regional organizations, the United Nations and the States that wielded influence over the parties in each conflict. Stronger commitment was required to support the countries that were hosting large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.

38. Establishing a single agency responsible for internally displaced persons was not feasible. The first responsibility for addressing the problems of internally displaced persons was the State concerned. In that regard, better coordination was needed between Governments, civil society and humanitarian agencies. In addition, he had strongly recommended the appointment of another Special Representative of the Secretary-General for internally displaced persons, who could raise awareness of the issue and play a key role in ensuring that the guiding principles and the Kampala Convention on internal displacement were implemented. The increasing number of States that had ratified the Convention was highly encouraging and suggested that other regions would be open to adopting a similar instrument.

39. He applauded the efforts made by the Sudan to assist the large number of refugees entering the country from South Sudan. UNHCR had entered into a trilateral agreement with Chad and the Sudan to arrange sustainable returns for refugees from Chad when the security situation allowed it. He supported the Sudan's call for more resettlement opportunities for refugees.

40. UNHCR was not directly involved in tackling human trafficking and smuggling, but cooperated with IOM on the matter and considered it a priority. The international community needed to address the root causes of human trafficking and open up more legal avenues for mobility, such as visa schemes and family reunification programmes, while cracking down more effectively on smugglers and traffickers. UNHCR had guidelines for distinguishing between economic migrants and refugees. The human rights of both must be respected, but UNHCR was responsible only for addressing the needs of those fleeing persecution or conflict.

41. The Solutions Alliance, launched in Copenhagen in April 2014, was an important tool for developing a comprehensive approach to ending displacement, since it called for solutions at both the local and global level. He hoped to see more initiatives in which host and destination States worked together to address refugee

problems. At the same time, the role of development actors must be increased. A change in the culture of development cooperation was required so that middle-income countries, such as Lebanon, could access the assistance they clearly needed. Development cooperation could contribute to stability and peace and hence to ending not only displacement but even conflict, and he called on stakeholders, including development agencies and international financial institutions to examine development cooperation priorities from that perspective.

42. To improve efficiency, a truly universal system of humanitarian assistance that encompassed all cultural and religious traditions in the field must be established as a matter of priority. Too often, operations were carried out in parallel because of the different origins of the humanitarian aid providers. To meet the huge demand for assistance, all efforts should be combined and coordinated under a common understanding of the overarching principles that guided humanitarian action.

43. UNHCR had reduced its expenditures by drastically cutting staff and overhead and prioritizing activities. The gap between the resources needed and those received, however, had forced UNHCR to go beyond prioritizing to cutting vital programmes, such as education for children in refugee camps, and reducing food rations for refugees in Africa. More resources needed to be found or more actors needed to be brought in. In Ethiopia, for example, funding was a major problem, while in South Sudan, refugees were living in dramatic conditions. He concurred that a solutions-oriented approach must be pursued that would allow people to voluntarily return home or relocate to safe areas. The funding of UNHCR programmes in Africa was completely inadequate. Tragedies in Africa should be given the same priority as those that more often filled the headlines, such as the situations in Ukraine, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Prevention was the only real way to reduce the capacity shortfall. Capacity could be increased if prevention failed, but it would never be able to keep up with the exponential growth in needs. Political solutions were the most important ones, but it was up to the international community to reach them. UNHCR was bound by impartiality and neutrality and could not intervene in that regard.

44. On the subject of funding, UNHCR had a very effective operational relationship with OCHA and was calling for assessed contributions to be used to



establish a “super central emergency response fund” for level 3 emergencies which were impossible to address with voluntary funding. He had not proposed that assessed contributions be used to fund UNHCR. Non-earmarked funding was the most useful because it could be used in many ways and improved the capacity of UNHCR to respond to the different crises that emerged. He thanked Sweden for contributing generously to UNHCR, largely in non-earmarked funds.

45. Until recently, the Syrian Arab Republic had hosted the second largest number of refugees in the world, and it was now time for the international community to support displaced Syrians inside and outside their country. That included protecting them from exploitation and other forms of abuse. UNHCR was working with host Governments to address those issues, and he understood that major improvements in relation to security had been recorded. UNHCR had the mandate to assist those fleeing conflict and persecution, whether by State or non-State actors. It was, however, the responsibility of States, not UNHCR, to guarantee people’s security. UNHCR had the most advanced registration system for refugees not in camps, which had helped ensure, for example, that not one Syrian refugee in the neighbouring countries had perished of cold last winter. Cash grants had been made available for vulnerable families, and UNHCR was working with host Governments to ensure that refugees received health care and education. The resources gap was, however, huge since the Syrian refugee population exceeded 3 million persons. Refugee camps must be strictly humanitarian in nature, and it was completely unacceptable for recruitment by armed groups or similar activities to take place within them. UNHCR was committed to working with host countries to ensure that the humanitarian status of camps was respected.

46. In Ukraine, UNHCR was assisting the Government in its efforts to attend the needs of internally displaced persons through a winterization programme and support for vulnerable families. A long-term solution to the situation, however, must be found. The mandate of UNHCR was to protect those fleeing conflict or persecution, but he appreciated the need to find a solution for persons who might be displaced by other causes, such as rising sea levels, as noted by the representative of Papua New Guinea. It had been suggested that the issue be addressed as one

of statelessness, but nationals of a small island developing State whose territory had disappeared might wish to remain citizens of their State and not take up another nationality. The problem called for a creative solution. With regard to the cooperation programme in which Papua New Guinea was involved, he wished to underscore that States were directly responsible for the refugees who came to their territory, and that responsibility should not, in principle, be outsourced.

47. **Mr. Boubacar** (Mauritania), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that there were 3.5 million refugees in Africa and the situation had reached alarming proportions. That population was rapidly increasing at a time when the continent was facing serious challenges with regard to economic recovery, the threat of Ebola, the debt crisis, deteriorating terms of trade, the collapse of commodity prices, food security and the effects of climate change. The African Group looked forward to the speedy completion of the study on the contribution of Africa to hosting refugees for the consideration of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

48. Solutions would not be reached unless the root causes of crises in Africa were addressed. The African Group would continue to strengthen ongoing dialogue in that regard. It called upon the international community to redouble its efforts in providing material and financial assistance to Africa in order to strengthen existing commitments and regional efforts with regard to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In terms of durable solutions to protracted refugee situations and statelessness, the voluntary repatriation of refugees was the preferred option, while local integration and resettlement were also recommended. The African Group encouraged UNHCR to continue its work in that vein, while continuing to address xenophobia and balancing its resources between emergency and protracted situations.

49. African States were taking the necessary measures within their limited capacities to address the refugee crises in the continent. However, such measures were dependent on genuine solidarity, international cooperation and the sharing of burdens and responsibility among States, UNHCR and other partners. Of particular concern was the growing phenomenon of protracted refugee situations, which were often exacerbated by food insecurity, social

tension and violence. In addition, the Africa region was often given lower priority for humanitarian assistance owing to geopolitical and economic factors, which further drew out conflicts and increased the number of displaced persons. The growing funding gaps were a matter of great concern, as they resulted in forced cuts in food rations for refugees in Africa, threatening to worsen acute malnutrition and anaemia. Although the UNHCR budget for Africa had been increased to \$2.5 billion in 2014, only \$834 million had been provided. The funding gaps for assistance to the Central African Republic and South Sudan were especially critical and had severe implications for their peoples. The proposed reductions to the 2015 budget for several regions in Africa were another matter of concern.

50. At its sixty-fifth plenary session held in September 2014, the UNHCR Executive Committee had acknowledged the hospitality and solidarity that the States and peoples of Africa had demonstrated to millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. In that regard, the African Group believed that the renewed commitment and sharing of responsibility among all States would lead to an improvement in the situation for refugees in Africa.

51. **Mr. Mwinyi** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), reaffirmed the Community's commitment to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. He said that situations of internal displacement continued to be on the rise in Africa, where the number of internally displaced persons had grown from 10.4 million to 12.5 million. The deteriorating situation in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, demonstrated the gravity of the ongoing insecurity, giving rise to new emergency situations and further prolonging already protracted situations. Sub-Saharan Africa continued to experience a decreased level of funding, in contradiction of the principles of responsibility and burden-sharing. Developing nations had given more than their share despite their own economic hardships.

52. UNHCR had continued to carry out registration and refugee status determination in more than 60 countries. One of the major resolutions from recent meetings in the SADC area had focused on the need to harmonize refugee laws with a view to developing a

regional framework policy on refugee matters. SADC was therefore concerned with the continued dominance of and reliance on UNHCR in executing roles and functions that should be performed by host States. SADC called on UNHCR to develop a clear plan of action and programme with a view to building the capacities of host States to register refugees, determine their status and maintain relevant databases, all of which had security implications.

53. SADC efforts to resolve protracted refugee situations included the establishment of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, which outlined strategies for social reintegration, while the Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ set out key activities for its member States, such as establishing a common understanding on the target groups for reintegration; identifying partners for funding; developing a handbook on social reintegration; sharing the best practices of the region on the social reintegration of demobilized combatants, refugees and internally displaced persons; and organizing training workshops.

54. Speaking in his national capacity, he noted that his Government's decision to naturalize 162,156 former Burundians had not been taken lightly, owing to the large number of refugees who would require local integration and the budgetary and cost implications. Therefore, funding of the initiative would require the complete support of the international community and should involve both relief partners and development actors. The initiative to end one of the most protracted refugee situations in Africa should not fail owing to a lack of sufficient funding.

55. **Ms. Schlyter** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that as the world moved from crisis to crisis, more displacement was inevitable and a comprehensive long-term approach was needed. More must be done to prevent forced displacement, address its root causes and support solutions for those affected by it. The multiple level 3 crises and the outbreak of the Ebola virus had revealed the pressure on humanitarian organizations to deliver and their limited capacity to do so. At the same time, aid delivery had become increasingly complex. In preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit in

2016, the international community should collectively strive to reconfirm the core humanitarian principles and underline the importance of respect for international humanitarian law.

56. The European Union reaffirmed its commitment to support the generous States hosting large numbers of refugees and host communities accommodating refugee populations. There was a particular need to strengthen protection, improve the situation of persons of concern and facilitate durable solutions.

57. Although financial support for UNHCR was at its highest ever level, with almost \$3 billion contributed in 2014, the needs-based budget for 2015 amounted to almost \$6.3 billion. Donors, international organizations and host Governments must expand their efforts to bridge the divide between humanitarian and development actors in order to enhance protection, offer more effective assistance for forcibly displaced persons and progress towards durable solutions. Improved synergies between emergency, development and protection programmes that brought together international organizations, civil society organizations and national Governments would benefit both the displaced and their host communities. The European Union was working with the Governments of Jordan and Lebanon and host Governments in the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development actors. The close collaboration between countries of origin and neighbouring countries, with the support of UNHCR, to develop regional development and protection programmes was commendable.

58. In the European Union, asylum applications had risen to over 450,000 in 2013. Conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, poverty and unrest in the Horn of Africa and West Africa, and security chaos in Libya had spurred many to flee towards Europe. In that regard, the number of people who had drowned in the Mediterranean Sea had dramatically increased in 2014. Desperate people also fell into the hands of human traffickers, with often tragic consequences. Through its Mare Nostrum humanitarian rescue programme, Italy had brought more than 100,000 migrants to safe shores. The European Union had adopted a comprehensive approach aimed at maintaining a high level of protection, prevent loss of life and address the root causes driving people to flee their homes. It welcomed the choice of protection at sea as the topic for the 2014

High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges.

59. The number of refugee children had risen dramatically in recent years, with minors accounting for more than one quarter of all asylum applications in Europe in 2013. The number of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum in the European Union had, however, remained relatively stable in 2013.

60. Member States must commit at the national level to developing and implementing sustainable policies to provide protection to forcibly displaced persons. States receiving asylum seekers must also tackle racism and xenophobia by sensitizing their citizens to the core human values that guided international commitments to protect those who fled conflict and persecution.

61. **Ms. Derderian** (United States of America) said that her Government had contributed more than \$1 billion in 2014 to UNHCR. The scale of the crises in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Africa had stretched the humanitarian community. Although UNHCR had responded to the challenges, the organization must not be pushed beyond its limits. Nurturing and valuing long-standing partnerships, while developing new ones, must be the operational foundation of UNHCR work. Only with strong communication and coordination would the needs of the most vulnerable be met.

62. UNHCR must continue to strengthen organizational capacities by pursuing a human resources policy that delivered strong performance in emergency situations. Her Government commended UNHCR for increasing programme support and administration costs to match the immense costs of field operations and welcomed its shift from a resource-driven planning process to one based on performance and results. It was important for UNHCR to continue on that path, making objective standards and indicators more measurable and less subjective, improving reporting on indicators, and incorporating recommendations and findings from its evaluations into future programming.

63. **Mr. Lukiyantsev** (Russian Federation) said that his Government affirmed that the 1951 Refugee Convention should remain as the basis of the international system for the protection of refugees and the UNHCR mandate should remain unchanged. UNHCR work should be strictly humanitarian and non-politicized. His Government supported the

preservation of the key role of the Executive Committee in implementing decisions on the international protection of refugees and reaffirmed its commitment to UNHCR standards for responding to large-scale forced displacement. It supported UNHCR efforts towards structural and budgetary reform of its activities, which should be carried out strictly within the framework of the current mandate. The efforts of UNHCR and Governments should be coordinated in order to create national refugee protection mechanisms and facilitate UNHCR efforts to support the development of relevant national systems. There should be clear agreement on the forms and methods of the relevant coordination activities.

64. His Government supported the approach of UNHCR towards finding long-term solutions to the problems of return, voluntary repatriation and resettlement. More balanced approaches must be established for large-scale resettlement in emergencies to third countries, which should be determined together with key regional partners. The Russian Federation called for UNHCR to increase its focus on reducing statelessness, including the long-standing problem of large-scale statelessness in Latvia and Estonia, which was unacceptable.

65. Russian federal and local authorities were adopting every possible measure to accommodate and ensure the humanitarian needs of Ukrainian citizens who had been forced to leave their country as a result of the internal armed conflict. In the Russian Federation, there were currently more than 800,000 persons who had come from Ukraine, of which almost 450,000 had requested temporary asylum or another form of status of residence. UNHCR representation in the Russian Federation had visited accommodation for Ukrainian refugees, which had allowed it to form an objective overview of the forcibly displaced population. The Russian Federation was grateful for the steps taken by UNHCR to draw the attention of the international community to the Ukrainian refugee problem and called on the Office to continue to highlight objectively the humanitarian consequences of the Ukrainian crisis, including a large migration flow to the Russian Federation and other European countries. UNHCR was also requested to assist with the reintegration of returning refugees and internally displaced persons in south-east Ukraine.

66. **Mr. Rishchynski** (Canada) said that a renewed international commitment to protect civilians and

stability was all the more vital as conflicts escalated and levels of displacement surged worldwide. Drawing on the example of Iraq, where the targeting of religious minorities by ISIL had led to their displacement, he noted with concern that once religious minority groups had been displaced, they faced further risks, had less access to formal and informal support and protection, and continued to face discrimination, violence and exploitation. Displacement was caused not only by conflicts; the Ebola virus, which had exacerbated long-standing peace and security problems, was a global issue requiring united and cross-sectoral international action. His Government was deeply concerned by incidents of refoulement in various regions and called on all States to respect that cornerstone of the international protection system. When responding to sudden, rapidly developing crises, priority must be given to finding and implementing sustainable solutions for protracted displacement.

67. The disproportionately high numbers of forcibly displaced and unaccompanied children and the sustained risk of sexual violence and violence against women were a matter of concern. His delegation emphasized the importance of ensuring that displaced children were provided with a safe nurturing environment and the learning opportunities needed to reclaim their childhood. Education was a powerful tool for reducing the vulnerability of children, especially in protracted refugee situations.

68. **Mr. Antonio Patriota** (Brazil) said that UNHCR had reduced expenditure in staffing at headquarters and had shifted its focus to operations in order to respond to new challenges. Approximately 90 per cent of UNHCR staff were currently working in the field, which should be an example to all agencies and the United Nations system as a whole.

69. There had been increased collaboration between his Government and UNHCR, including through a cooperation agreement and a financial contribution of \$3 million intended to increase the efficiency of the procedural mechanisms of the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees. In recognition of the growing refugee flows into Brazil, UNHCR had recently opened a second office in São Paulo in partnership with federal authorities and civil society organizations. Since 2013, Brazil had granted visas to over 5,000 asylum seekers for humanitarian reasons. The facilitated visa initiative would be extended into 2015 and beyond without quotas or quantitative limitations. Specific policies for

Syrian, Syrian-Palestinian and Lebanese nationals had been adopted, including a decree aimed at expediting procedures for family reunification. Demonstrating their commitment to the principles of solidarity and burden-sharing, other States in the region, such as Uruguay and Argentina, had adopted similar measures. In December 2014, Brazil would host a ministerial meeting on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, during which a plan of action on enhancing protection and solutions across Latin America would be adopted. A draft law on the protection of stateless persons would soon be submitted to the Brazilian Congress.

70. His Government attached importance to the protection of women and child refugees. Regional organizations, including the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), had condemned the practice of detention of minors. The treatment of children and adolescents during arrest and imprisonment based on their irregular status and undocumented entry into countries of transit and destination was an issue of grave concern. It was crucial to uphold and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all asylum seekers and avoid practices that might increase their vulnerability. Child refugees must also be protected from human rights violations and assured access to services, including education. In that regard, Brazil had participated in the joint activities of UNHCR and UNICEF within the No Lost Generation initiative.

71. In line with its humanitarian cooperation policies, his Government strongly supported the strategy of strengthening refugee self-reliance, livelihoods and resilience-building mechanisms through the use of cash transfers, local purchases and social safety nets, as those instruments bridged the divide between assistance and development actions. In that regard, it welcomed the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan and was pleased to note the increase in the use of cash transfer programmes by UNHCR as well as its efforts to ensure nutrition and food security through joint collaboration with the World Food Programme. Brazil had provided financial support to UNHCR pilot projects for the implementation of local procurement schemes, which contributed to the development of local economies, the dignity of refugees and their acceptance by host communities.

72. Brazil commended the High Commissioner for highlighting the role of prevention, diplomacy and

political resolve in addressing the plight of refugees. Such challenges were the consequence of often mistakenly militaristic strategies to address conflict resolution and it was high time to stop such senseless violence.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*