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Chair: Mr. Davis (Jamaica)

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In the absence of the Chair, Mr. Davis (Jamaica), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

1. **Mr. Joshi** (India) said that while the numbers of refugees and displaced persons worldwide had reached alarming levels, durable solutions to their plight remained in short supply, hence the need to formulate comprehensive policies and create conditions favourable to their early return and reintegration into their societies. In that regard, he commended the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its role in providing protection and assistance to refugees in collaboration with Member States and stressed that the agency should focus on that core mandate, as opposed to other persons of concern. UNHCR involvement with internally displaced persons should only proceed in consultation with national authorities.

2. The rise in violence against asylum seekers by non-State actors, particularly in conflict situations, was a matter of concern. However, the question of asylum seekers and that of migrants must be addressed separately, and international migration must be promoted in a non-discriminatory and orderly manner. Maintaining a clear distinction between refugees and economic migrants was in the interest of the protection needs of the former.

3. Developing countries deserved recognition for their considerable efforts to host refugees. In the absence of appropriate adjustments to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees to reflect the current realities of massive refugee flows and mixed migration, his country and others would have difficulty acceding to that legal framework, their commitment to hosting refugees notwithstanding. India's refugee assistance programmes were funded entirely by the Government, whose protection regime was based on the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and other relevant provisions. His Government continued to refine its administrative mechanisms with a view to providing greater hospitality to refugees during their stay in the country. India was committed to building international

solidarity and burden sharing, the foundations upon which refugee protection rested.

4. **Mr. Bamrungphong** (Thailand) said that the generosity of countries that hosted refugees despite the heavy financial burden was commendable and merited continued support and solidarity. As a host country, Thailand strongly supported burden sharing, given that no country should have to shoulder the humanitarian responsibility alone. His Government had been contributing to the Central Emergency Response Fund and would consider further contributions commensurate with its ability. It was vital to enhance consultations and prepare policy groundwork for a possible voluntary return of the roughly 130,000 displaced persons living in nine temporary shelters in Thailand. In that regard, the role of UNHCR and relevant stakeholders would be crucial.

5. There was a need for enhanced regional cooperation on the irregular movements of persons by sea. Furthermore, the cause of irregular outflows at the areas of origin must be addressed systematically in order to eliminate the push factor and allow safe return as an option. However, a sustainable approach to the problem might take time to implement, hence the need for proactive intermediate measures. While there was no one-size-fits-all solution for every situation, the problem of irregular movement of persons required increased cooperation and tangible measures, rather than a new framework.

6. **Mr. Rabi** (Morocco) said that despite the progress achieved towards finding durable solutions to refugee situations, new crises had resulted in massive internal displacement and a spike in the number of new refugees. Africa was particularly affected by the flow of displaced persons and managed to maintain its long-standing tradition of hospitality. However, donor contributions notwithstanding, available funds remained below the amount necessary to assist refugees, a situation compounded by the chronic underfunding of United Nations operations. He therefore urged the international community to strengthen its support for UNHCR and to assist West African countries in containing the Ebola epidemic.

7. Registering and counting refugee camp populations was a precondition for extending effective protection to refugees. Unfortunately, some countries continued to oppose UNHCR efforts to conduct a census, hindering the agency from carrying out its mandate. Nevertheless, host countries had a legal and a moral obligation to uphold the rights of refugees and to

ensure their protection from potential risks, including transnational criminal activity. Morocco reiterated the call on host countries, particularly those involved in protracted refugee situations, to fulfil their obligations under international law by allowing UNHCR to carry out censuses and protect the human rights of refugees.

8. **Mr. Tsutsumi** (Japan) said that his Government was deeply concerned at the number of people forced to evacuate as a result of large-scale crises in Africa and the Middle East. Japan would continue to work with UNHCR and the international community to assist refugees and their host countries. Its international cooperation in that regard included \$50 million in emergency assistance to the Middle East and \$17 million to Africa. After providing official development assistance for six decades, Japan was establishing new guiding principles, including high-quality economic growth, the rule of law and the realization of a peaceful and stable society. Nevertheless, it would retain the same overall approach, namely that the most important element of the fight against poverty was encouraging a sense of ownership and self-help efforts among the people concerned. Moving forward, his country would also place emphasis on human security and women's empowerment.

9. **Ms. Klemetsdal** (Norway) said that with more displaced persons than at any other time in the history of UNHCR, the international humanitarian system was under enormous pressure and the capacities of the agency and its partners were being stretched to the limits. In such conditions, there was an even stronger need to build partnerships within and outside the humanitarian community. Protection remained a serious challenge, particularly in conflict situations. One of the most effective ways to enhance the protection of persons affected by conflict would be for States and parties to conflict to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law. Moreover, including education in the initial humanitarian response could also be lifesaving, as education provided access to protection, health care, lifesaving information and water and sanitation facilities. In 2015, her Government would host an international conference on education for children affected by emergencies.

10. Weather-related disasters and climate-change-related phenomena undermined the livelihoods of millions, forcing some, especially those in low-lying coastal and island communities, from their homes. The challenges posed by that trend, which was not expected

to improve, were not properly understood or addressed. In that regard, Norway expressed gratitude for the interest of UNHCR and Member States in the Nansen Initiative, which would aim to build consensus around the development of a protection agenda that addressed the needs of people displaced across international borders by disasters and climate change.

11. **Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that her country had spent decades welcoming millions of refugees who had fled acts of aggression that it had had no hand in. Moreover, it had done so without exploiting their suffering in international forums. The host country with the second largest refugee community in the world, the Syrian Arab Republic had always treated refugees, whatever their nationality, as guests and brothers, sharing its limited resources with them.

12. Presently facing an orchestrated humanitarian crisis, her Government was cooperating with UNHCR and civil society organizations to address the plight of internally displaced Syrians fleeing both the criminal acts of terrorist groups supported and financed from abroad and the brutal impact of illegal unilateral measures imposed on her country by the European Union and the United States of America. The armed terrorist groups targeted communities, fuelled by sectarian motivations, with the ultimate aim of tearing asunder the country's social fabric.

13. The Syrian Arab Republic had been warning for months of the perils of the severe financing shortfall for the humanitarian response plan, with pledges coming in at under 39 per cent of the projected need. Apart from terrorism, the shortfall was the main obstacle to delivering humanitarian assistance to civilians in need of it in affected areas within Syria. Funding for the regional response plan for Syrian refugees had reached a scant 52 per cent of the budget allocated for assistance for 2014. Her delegation urged the United Nations to address that challenge openly and transparently, to put an end to the politicization of the humanitarian question and to refrain from placing undue blame on her Government.

14. Her delegation expressed grave concern about the deteriorating security, social, health and economic situation in the Syrian refugee camps abroad, which had been transformed into terrorist training camps from which terrorists were sent into the Syrian Arab Republic to carry out massacres. The UNHCR report and others had highlighted the rise in organized crime, rape, child labour, prostitution and child marriage and

recruitment of child soldiers by terrorist groups in the camps. Moreover, the majority of children in the camps did not attend school. Furthermore, the camps lacked legal officers on refugee affairs, and the theft and smuggling of humanitarian materials and trafficking in persons, particularly girls, were widespread. Host Governments and UNHCR must take action to raise awareness of and protect Syrians from those ills, assuming there was a genuine wish to do so.

15. Her delegation regretted that some Governments and international organizations were exaggerating the issue of counting Syrian refugees on their soil in order to beg for financial assistance, as well as attempting to bar Syrian nationals from returning home by confiscating their identity documents. Syrians had begun to return home gradually, especially those who had left for neighbouring countries, according to UNHCR reports. In 2014 alone, the Syrian Government had been able to repatriate approximately one million Syrians to their original domiciles after security was restored.

16. Those who truly wished to assist Syrian refugees should do so by helping them return to their homes instead of attempting to make permanent their refugee situation and selecting specific groups for settlement in other countries, based on their religious or ethnic identity. Such measures posed a major threat to the country's unity and served the purposes of the takfirist terrorist groups that were attempting to turn the Syrian Arab Republic into an Islamist emirate in which all human rights were violated.

17. **Mr. Ansari Dogahneh** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the UNHCR office in Tehran had opened over three decades earlier, concurrently with a massive influx of refugees into the country. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to host one of the largest protracted refugee populations in the world, with Iraqis and Afghanis comprising the two major caseloads. His Government had drawn upon its national budget to provide education, health and other basic services to refugees, despite the detrimental impact of the illegitimate sanctions against Iran on the Iranian people and humanitarian activity in the country. Some 70 per cent of the refugees in the region — which itself was home to one third of the world's refugees — hailed from Afghanistan and lived in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. His Government had implemented a comprehensive regularization plan for undocumented Afghans in the country, providing legal temporary stay arrangements on the basis of renewable residence permits. Its progressive policy of ensuring that all

refugee children attended school and that refugees had access to work permits and health insurance had been lauded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

18. At the sixty-fifth session of the UNHCR Executive Committee, his Government had stressed that the reconstruction of Afghanistan must be taken into account and that the root causes of the refugee problem in the region must be addressed. On the sidelines of the session, a consultative session on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees had been held to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries. The Strategy constituted a holistic approach to addressing the protracted refugee situation in the region. Under the Strategy, his country had enhanced access to education and work permits for registered Afghan refugees. The Islamic Republic of Iran hoped that the Strategy would become a key national priority under the new Afghan unity Government.

19. Millions of Afghan refugees continued to live in host countries due to the lack of facilities for local integration. The international community had failed to make sufficient efforts to improve the conditions for the repatriation of Afghan refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the amount of assistance extended to returnees remained inadequate. His Government had always supported the right of refugees to voluntary repatriation to the homeland in safety and dignity, as evinced by its involvement in Afghan reconstruction programmes. However, the realization of that right required international support in order to ensure that minimum social welfare standards were in place.

20. His country also supported resettlement as an alternative solution to the plight of refugees but noted that a very small proportion of the exorbitant number of refugees worldwide were admitted to resettlement countries. In closing, the Islamic Republic of Iran called on the international community to allocate the necessary funding to projects aimed at providing education and health services to and maintaining facilities for Afghan refugees in Iran.

21. **Mr. Chir** (Algeria) said that his delegation was particularly concerned by the large-scale emergency situations and ensuing refugee and internal displacement crises in Sub-Saharan Africa over the previous year. While addressing those emerging situations was crucial, it was equally important not to lose sight of protracted refugee situations. Durable

solutions must be sought by addressing the underlying causes of those situations in order to create the conditions for the voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and dignity. Given that the large numbers of refugees in protracted refugee situations were mainly living in developing countries, taking a toll on those countries' economic and social development, his delegation called for greater international solidarity and continued support for the host countries. In that regard, he welcomed the steadfast support of donor States to UNHCR.

22. A country with a long tradition of receiving refugees, Algeria continued to host Sahrawi refugees from the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara, who awaited their voluntary repatriation as part of the implementation of a durable solution to their plight, based on the full and fair exercise of the right to self-determination. In that connection, he urged donors to continue to support UNHCR programmes for those refugees and welcomed the organization in November 2013 of a joint evaluation mission representing UNHCR, the World Food Programme and donors that had given them an opportunity to assess existing need. His delegation also noted with appreciation that over 20,000 persons had benefited from the programme of confidence-building measures aimed at organizing family visits between Sahrawi refugees living in Algeria and their families in Western Sahara.

23. Algeria was also host to over 23,000 refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and large numbers of refugees from Libya, Mali, Niger and other Sub-Saharan African countries. In closing, he reiterated his country's appreciation for the support of UNHCR in the process of bringing its national legislation relating to asylum seekers into line with the relevant international standards.

24. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that despite the role of UNHCR in dealing with refugee issues, the challenges posed by increasing numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons persisted, a result of natural, humanitarian and environmental disasters as well as armed conflict. Efforts must be redoubled to address the root causes and mitigate their repercussions, in particular in areas affected by food insecurity. In that connection, Egypt reaffirmed the importance of increasing resources to finance UNHCR activities and of paying special attention to protracted refugee situations in recipient developing countries. The protection of refugees, in line with the relevant international obligations, was imperative. Nevertheless, the principles of international solidarity, partnership

and burden sharing should be respected pending the voluntary repatriation or resettlement of refugees. Developed countries should also be encouraged to receive more refugees. Moreover, assistance must be provided to the Governments of countries emerging from conflict. In that connection, his delegation stressed the need to provide support for the Peacebuilding Commission.

25. The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic had resulted in millions of internally displaced persons and refugees. Egypt was currently hosting hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees, in addition to over a million Sudanese and Palestinian refugees. It had spared no effort in providing care and assistance to those refugees in Egypt, in cooperation with UNHCR and other relevant United Nations and international agencies. Support from the international community was needed to further strengthen the efforts of host countries. Lastly, several initiatives aimed at coping with the changing international environment, in particular the initiative to complement the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, must be reinvigorated in order to establish a more equitable partnership and thereby offer sustainable solutions for refugee issues worldwide, particularly in Africa.

26. **Ms. Abdullah** (Iraq) said that the occupation of parts of her country by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the crimes perpetrated by the terrorist organization had resulted in a major humanitarian disaster, displacing over 1.8 million Iraqis into Iraqi Kurdistan and the central and southern governorates. Nevertheless, her Government and the Government of Iraqi Kurdistan had continued to cooperate with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and United Nations agencies on the ground to provide relief for the displaced, to the extent possible. Iraqi security forces had managed to re-establish control over national territory and return the displaced to their homes.

27. Her Government had issued a humanitarian call to the international community, requesting its help in repelling the terrorist onslaught in parts of its territory. Iraq had also requested the Human Rights Council to hold a special session on the terrorist crimes committed by the so-called ISIL terrorist gangs and their impact on human rights. The Council had called for the protection of the displaced and for assistance with their repatriation.

28. Since the beginning of the crisis, her Government had established a high commission on the displaced to provide relief to families displaced by terrorism and allocated 500 billion Iraqi dinars for the launch of its operations. Measures taken to lessen the burden of displaced families included the facilitation of transport by air, the registration of their location by a team dispatched to the field in order to deliver assistance and the provision of monetary stipends.

29. **Mr. Masood Khan** (Pakistan) said that the number of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers exceeded 50 million, the highest since World War II, and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Africa had generated new waves of migration. Children constituted over half of the refugee population. They suffered from lack of proper nutrition and education, and were exposed to exploitation and abuse. For that reason child protection should remain the core priority of the United Nations and UNHCR. Given the scores seeking asylum illegally in Europe, Pakistan supported the UNHCR call to the European Union to grant legal entry to more refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic.

30. With the capacity of global humanitarian response approaching its limit, innovative, sustainable strategies were needed to address new refugee movements and internal displacements, and find durable solutions to protracted refugee situations that were being disregarded. Over half of the world's refugees lived in protracted situations, and Pakistan hosted the largest population among them: over 3 million registered and unregistered Afghan refugees. Despite great strain on Pakistan's already limited resources, his Government had provided them shelter and assistance for over three decades. The third generation of Afghan refugees had been born, even as international support had dwindled significantly. Pakistan had continued to provide necessary services, including refugee camps on Government-owned land, access to health facilities and public schools. The resources of his Government had been further stretched by massive relief efforts following recent floods and the relocation of hundreds of thousands due to the ongoing Zarb-i-Azb anti-terrorist operation. Pakistan had signed another agreement with the Government of Afghanistan and UNHCR to extend the stay of Afghan refugees until December 2015, after which the return of those refugees, with the support of the international community, was anticipated.

31. His Government welcomed the election of the new Afghan leadership and its announcement that the

return of refugees was high on its agenda. Pakistan would soon send representatives to Kabul to discuss modalities for the repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees, who should return to their homeland voluntarily and with honour and dignity. Pakistan needed adequate international support to definitively resolve one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world. It called on UNHCR and the international community to support the people and Government of Afghanistan to create an environment conducive to the return of the refugees, which would depend on the sustainability of reintegration and salutary developments during the transition period.

32. Inside Afghanistan, the international community should help the Government of Afghanistan to mitigate displacement, and UNHCR to enhance its contingency humanitarian response capacity to stem outflows of refugees for which the risk was quite high. In that context, it was equally important to increase humanitarian support in the subregion surrounding Afghanistan, especially Pakistan, to find lasting refugee solutions. Recent international conferences had secured pledges of billions of dollars for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Those pledges should also factor in the repatriation and rehabilitation of returning refugees.

33. **Ms. Abdulkadir** (Ethiopia) said that in 2004 Ethiopia had enacted its National Refugee Proclamation, which comprised the principles contained in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, ensured an appropriate legislative and administrative framework had been put in place. Accordingly, a number of programmes had been devised and were being implemented with a view to facilitating the repatriation and reintegration of returnees, meeting their regular and emergency needs, reconciling refugees and host communities, and ensuring the maintenance of law and order in refugee camps.

34. Ethiopia was host to over 644,000 refugees, in particular from Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. In collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, her Government had launched a scheme enabling Eritrean refugees to live outside camps, facilitating the enrolment of 1,423 of them in university. Educational opportunities had been given to 26,000 primary and 2,000 secondary school students. University scholarships had been granted to 271 Somali refugees, and 884 Somali refugees had

graduated in different fields. A number of refugees had also benefited from a microfinance scheme.

35. **Mr. Yao Shaojun** (China) said that China welcomed the efforts made by UNHCR to promote international refugee protection and respond to emergency humanitarian crises. The international community should urgently address the symptoms and root causes of the refugee problem. First, it was essential to foster a peaceful and stable international and regional environment. In accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, determined efforts should be made to solve regional and international disputes peacefully, to step up mediation efforts by United Nations and regional organizations and to de-escalate armed conflicts.

36. Second, it was imperative to adhere to the principle and spirit of international solidarity and burden-sharing. The work of the Committee should be more coordinated and connected with the development agenda. Countries should strive to establish a more equal and balanced global development partnership. The international community should also take practical measures and increase input to help developing countries achieve sustainable development, enabling a permanent solution to the refugee problem. Developed countries in particular should fulfil their promises by providing financial and technical assistance to refugee-receiving countries.

37. Finally, it was essential to enhance the authority and efficacy of refugee protection mechanisms. They should adhere to the principles of objectivity, impartiality and humanity and guard against politicization and abuse of the system. Though it was imperative to protect and assist vulnerable groups, such as refugee women and children, equal attention should be paid to the reasonable request of host countries. China supported UNHCR efforts to further internal reforms, rationalize the distribution of resources, assist developing countries and improve the geographical representation of its staff. Coordination and cooperation should be strengthened among countries of origin, shelter, resettlement and donor countries, as well as UNHCR and other international agencies.

38. The Government of China paid great attention to refugee protection. It was constantly improving relevant domestic legislation and actively shouldered international responsibilities and obligations commensurate with its level of development. In 2014, China's annual contribution to UNHCR projects had increased from \$250,000 to \$800,000, providing

humanitarian assistance to refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Horn of Africa to relieve the effects of drought and famine, West African countries affected by the Ebola crisis, South Sudan and to Iraq, including the Kurdish region. China would continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR and, with other countries, contribute to international refugee protection.

39. **Mr. Kihurani** (Kenya) said that his Government was committed to promoting international cooperation and finding durable solutions to protracted refugee situations. It welcomed the efforts made by UNHCR in collaboration with host States to meet their obligations with regard to the protection and management of refugees. Unfortunately, new displacements surpassed the rate at which sustainable solutions were found. Over 50 million people had been displaced as a result of conflict, the majority of which were children. By the end of 2014, 11 million people would be displaced in Africa. Kenya hosted over 600,000 refugees of 36 nationalities, the largest number in Africa. Many of those had been forced to flee Somalia because of economic and climate-related factors. Unfortunately the factors that had led to their displacement had become the reality of host countries as well. The influx of refugees into Kenya had overwhelmed camp facilities and services. It had also degraded the environment, already scarce resources and strained his Government's hosting capacity. Competition for resources destabilized the communities where refugee camps were situated, leading to violence and further environmental damage that was difficult to reverse. For example, the water table in Dadaab had decreased from 80 metres to more than 250 metres below ground, requiring more resources to obtain reserves, while overexploitation had led to the disappearance of forest cover.

40. The recent recurrence of conflict in South Sudan had reversed gains made after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, leading returnees to flee once again. Kakuma refugee camp, which was originally designed to accommodate 70,000 refugees, hosted over 170,000. The Government was considering setting up a second camp to address the congestion. Other parts of Africa, such as Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Libya had also witnessed protracted displacement-inducing conflicts. Unfortunately, those cases did not attract the necessary attention.

41. Several regions in Africa were peaceful but lacked the necessary infrastructure to attract and sustain returnees. The international community was

therefore urged to support the region's efforts to build required infrastructure in terms of finance and policy. The burden shouldered by host countries should be shared with the rest of the international community. Both UNHCR and humanitarian partners required budgetary support for their operations in Africa. Kenya welcomed the introduction of that matter for consideration by the General Assembly.

42. Kenya urged those countries that had offered to resettle refugees to increase their numbers, and for other countries to propose resettlement opportunities. It also welcomed the convening of the high-level panel and meeting on the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees, which took place in Addis Ababa in August 2014, and anticipated actualization of the pledges made there and elsewhere. Funding for the Somali refugee situation had declined each year; but gains made in Somalia could not be sustained without adequate investment to target youth susceptible to radicalization and extremism. The international community was therefore urged to contribute more funds to promote economic growth and gainful employment in Somalia.

43. There had been encouraging progress toward stability in Somalia made possible by African Union Mission in Somalia peacekeeping forces. The involvement of Kenya in that mission was based on its strong belief that the stability, peace and prosperity of Somalia were inextricably linked to that of Kenya and neighbours in the region. In that regard, the Tripartite Agreement signed between Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR should be highlighted to establish a framework for supporting voluntary return to Somalia. UNHCR was urged to allocate funds for the implementation of that Agreement and the completion of the pilot project on repatriation, thereby driving implementation of the agreement and helping to create the necessary conditions for peace and stability. Notwithstanding the importance of supporting refugees, it was also necessary to support host communities. The international community was urged to supplement the budgetary provisions of host Governments to facilitate adequate security for their communities, refugee populations and humanitarian staff. The international community should also deal collectively with the root causes of conflicts that generated the flight of asylum seekers worldwide.

44. **Mr. Al-Jazuli** (Sudan) said that his country remained committed to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Moreover, Sudan's heritage and religious values compelled it to honour guests and make every effort to

provide them with food, shelter and relief. It had been receiving large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries for several decades. Its national commission on refugees, established in 1968, worked in collaboration with UNHCR. Furthermore, his Government had recently updated national legislation on refugee issues in 2014, to bring it into line with relevant regional and international instruments.

45. In the 40 years since it had begun hosting refugees from neighbouring African countries, Sudan had come to bear a burden exceeding its capacity to provide support for refugees, particularly in urban areas, which were not receiving international assistance despite the lofty rhetoric about partnership in burden sharing between the international community and refugee host countries. Against that backdrop, his delegation recalled that 70 per cent of refugees had moved from refugee camps to cities; that situation required prompt action by the international community to improve refugee camp conditions and provide necessary services in urban areas.

46. Sudan had recently received an influx of South Sudanese refugees numbering nearly 200,000 as a result of the ongoing conflict in that country. In recognition of the historic ties between the two countries and out of sympathy for the plight of the South Sudanese people, his Government had granted incoming refugees protection, better living conditions, freedom of movement and the right to work, treating South Sudanese as citizens. In that context, he thanked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his recent visit to the country and hoped the visit would result in increased assistance to the displaced until their voluntary return to their homes in dignity and security.

47. His Government had exerted efforts to combat transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons; with its vast borders and deserts, Sudan was a transit country prone to such crimes, whose victims were predominantly refugees and asylum-seekers. A law on trafficking in persons had been enacted, and the laws on passports and asylum had been amended to include provisions on combating smuggling and trafficking in persons. At the regional level, his Government had concluded border control agreements with neighbouring countries. In October 2014, Khartoum had hosted a regional conference to combat smuggling and trafficking in persons in the Horn of Africa; high-level officials and representatives of national, regional and international organizations had participated.

48. His delegation thanked donor countries for their assistance, particularly in the areas of capacity building and technical cooperation. His country's comprehensive dialogue on achieving regional stability was expected to have positive repercussions for Sudanese society as a whole, including refugees, and to help bring about the repatriation of Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries. He reiterated Sudan's commitment to continued cooperation with UNHCR and the broader international community through partnerships based on burden sharing. Lastly, he called on the international community to address refugee issues comprehensively in the context of debt relief for developing countries and the lifting of trade restrictions and unilateral sanctions imposed on some of them.

49. **Ms. Nescher** (Liechtenstein) said that her delegation was saddened that the number of persons displaced by conflict and persecution had reached its highest since World War II. Included in the 51.2 million people forcibly displaced were 33.3 million internally displaced persons, 6.5 million of which were located in the Syrian Arab Republic.

50. With 17 the average number of years of displacement, the issue of internal displacement could not be considered short-term. It was a development issue that impacted both the displaced and the countries concerned. The international community could not limit its action to humanitarian assistance, which only guaranteed basic survival; it should instead complement it with protection for the most vulnerable, prevention and preparedness work, and policies to pre-empt displacement.

51. Because access to education was so crucial to empowering women and children and enabling them to contribute to their recovery and that of their country and region, Liechtenstein welcomed the Draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict and anticipated its widespread implementation. The recent Berlin Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation had also highlighted the need to prioritize the provision of education to children affected by the conflict.

52. Together with those who believed that the prevention of the downward spiral that led to long-term displacement and extreme poverty was the over-arching purpose of the sustainable development agenda, Liechtenstein had proposed the inclusion of a target to reduce the number of internally displaced persons, which had, unfortunately, not been reflected.

53. Though the worsening of that situation appeared to be a direct result of the international community's collective failure to resolve and prevent conflict, Liechtenstein was confident that a shift of focus from humanitarian assistance to long-term development assistance for internally displaced persons would promote change. Such durable solutions should be the focus of any action taken in the Committee, the General Assembly, the Security Council, in the field and anywhere a difference could be made.

54. **Mr. Hahn** Choonghee (Republic of Korea) said that the convening of the high-level segment and the adoption of the Statement on Enhancing International Cooperation, Solidarity, Local Capacities and Humanitarian Action for Refugees in Africa at the 65th session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were timely and solemn reminders of the humanitarian crises that faced the international community. The Republic of Korea reaffirmed its commitment to expand humanitarian assistance to Africa and called on all States to provide the support necessary to address refugee situations in Africa.

55. Despite increasing insecurity, UNHCR had made notable achievements in acute and protracted refugee situations, including efforts to equip field staff and partners with relevant guidelines. It should continue to strengthen its lead role by way of the Global Protection Cluster.

56. The Republic of Korea found it worrisome that North Korean refugees and asylum seekers were repatriated against their will, and urged all States concerned to uphold the principle of non-refoulement. UNHCR should do all in its power to ensure universal compliance with that norm of customary international law. It was crucial to maintain structured partnerships and strong collaboration with the implementing partners of UNHCR programmes; UNHCR should ensure that the principles of partnership were fully understood and integrated at field level, and make certain that all staff behaved in a manner equal to those principles.

57. His Government urged UNHCR to streamline its coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs with regard to combined refugee-internally displaced person situations, and to eliminate duplication in needs assessment and coordination of service delivery. UNHCR was further encouraged to identify and

nominate appropriate candidates to the humanitarian coordinator pools.

58. Sustainable development was critical to addressing the root causes of longstanding humanitarian emergencies. The construction of a more inclusive framework for partnership between humanitarian and development actors would increase aid effectiveness and create synergy. Education also played a crucial role in protracted refugee situations that affected a significant number of children. The Republic of Korea encouraged UNHCR and the international community to improve refugee access to education; his Government was ready to play a role in that endeavour.

59. **Ms. Sucuoğlu** (Turkey) said that the overwhelming number of forcefully displaced persons compelled the international community to take action. It should find comprehensive solutions to the root causes of humanitarian crises and devise and implement durable policies. UNHCR played a central role in delivering assistance and providing guidance; but it was overburdened with work, stretched financially, and its staff was constantly in danger.

60. In the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, all relevant actors had a role to play. Innovative solutions were needed to improve access of humanitarian assistance to displaced persons. More multi-sectoral and sustainable spaces should be created to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. Immediate protection and assistance should be balanced with sustaining existing livelihoods or creating new ones.

61. The international community should address the needs of women and children as a priority. It was also important to tackle racism and xenophobia by sensitizing countries that received asylum seekers, including European Union countries, with a view to creating an environment suitable to the integration of such persons.

62. As the fifth largest host of displaced persons worldwide, Turkey assisted, protected and provided durable solutions for displaced persons from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Using a three-tiered approach and maintaining an open door policy, her Government supported populations living in and out of shelters and extended relief to those in need beyond its borders.

63. Turkey was committed to responding to the urgent needs of refugees and displaced persons in the region; however it anticipated that the international

community would share that duty in an equitable and meaningful way, in particular with regard to addressing the root causes of the problems behind such protracted situations.

64. **Mr. Sarki** (Nigeria) said that efforts should be made to ensure that displaced persons returned to peaceful and productive lives. The risks associated with forced displacement, including sexual violence, armed attacks and trafficking, were greater for women and girls. For that reason, Governments should work closely with development agencies, humanitarian actors and other stakeholders to develop durable solutions and strategies for refugees and internally displaced persons.

65. Donor support to UNHCR helped to ensure an environment conducive to the operation of humanitarian workers, whose dedication and courage in the face of difficult situations was admirable. Though progress had been made toward finding durable solutions, and many refugees had returned home or been integrated into local communities, emerging and ongoing emergencies in Africa caused massive internal displacement, resulting in an increase in the number of new refugees for the fourth consecutive year. Nigeria hosted refugees and understood the associated security risks, such as the proliferation of illicit arms, which endangered peace and security and aggravated displacement and decreased protection for those in need. Member States should redouble efforts to halt the transfer of illicit arms and immediately implement the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty.

66. To protect displaced persons, the African Union had adopted the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Nigeria had embraced the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and had ratified international and regional instruments for refugee protection, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Nigeria had also acceded to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. His Government had also enacted the National Commission for Refugees Act, which provided the legal and administrative framework for refugee management and set out guidelines for application and determination of refugee status in Nigeria. The Government had accelerated the adoption

of a national policy to define the framework for its actions in that regard, demonstrating its commitment to respect, protect and promote the human rights of displaced persons in the territory.

67. **Ms. Loew** (Switzerland) said that the primary responsibility of protecting refugees lay with States, who were urged to ratify and comply with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Her Government deemed the increase of forced displacement in violation of international humanitarian law unacceptable, and strongly condemned attacks on humanitarian personnel and the denial of access to vulnerable populations. Switzerland welcomed the commitment of UNHCR to strengthening humanitarian leadership and developing interagency coordination and collaboration with regard to internally displaced persons, and commended its efforts to place experienced personnel within the system, recruit young talent and strengthen emergency response capacity, in spite of constraints.

68. **Mr. Lasso Mendoza** (Ecuador) said that Ecuador's long tradition of welcoming refugees dated back to the 1970s, when tens of thousands of fellow Latin Americans had been forced into displacement by military dictatorships. His country had had the highest number of persons seeking asylum and refugee status in the region for several years running, and it had granted refugee status to citizens of over 70 countries.

69. In order to meet growing demand for refuge and asylum, Ecuador had strengthened institutional capacity throughout the country and was deploying teams to address the needs of refugees, particularly in provinces on the border with Colombia. It was providing training to public and private actors, armed forces, media, the national police and other branches of the authorities on promoting and protecting the rights of the refugee population. Refugees were guaranteed free movement in Ecuador, and they enjoyed the same rights and entitlements to free health care and education and had the same obligations as nationals. Since 2010, more than 27,000 foreign children had attended Ecuadorian schools and more than 65,000 foreigners had received care in public health centres.

70. Ecuador firmly adhered to the normative framework provided by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol and by its own Constitution, which recognized the rights to asylum and refugee status in accordance with international instruments and guaranteed special protection for asylum seekers and refugees, including

respect for the principle of non-refoulement and the provision of emergency humanitarian and legal assistance. His Government's investments in initiatives designed to address the needs of refugee and asylum-seeking populations had traditionally far exceeded international cooperation in that area, hence its concern about the reduction in UNHCR budgets. Ecuador urged the international community to uphold the principle of shared responsibility in that regard.

71. His country had granted asylum to Julian Assange in keeping with international human rights norms, according to which the deployment of all necessary international protection and asylum arrangements was justified in order to protect individuals from persecution. Nevertheless, Assange had been denied full enjoyment of his right to asylum and protection by external factors that had forced him into a situation of confinement for over two years. Ecuador urged the States concerned to abide by international law by respecting the human rights of all asylum-seekers, including Julian Assange.

72. **Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan) said that his country attached particular importance to the issue of refugees and displaced persons and shared the international community's concern over the record number of refugees resulting from conflicts worldwide. Those conflicts and the risks they involved, coupled with the lack of political solutions for long-standing humanitarian crises, fuelled forced displacement of an increasingly widespread, protracted and complex nature. A more consistent international approach was required to address the impact of conflict and foreign occupation on housing, land and property and to tackle discrimination against internally displaced persons and refugees, including forced demographic changes, in order to ensure the termination of illegal practices and policies and the safe and dignified return of displaced persons. To that end, enabling refugees to reclaim their lives and determine their futures in full respect of their dignity and rights should remain the primary goal of international protection efforts and a core responsibility of UNHCR.

73. As a direct consequence of Armenia's ongoing aggression against Azerbaijan, which had resulted in the occupation of almost one-fifth of Azerbaijan's territory, his country had one of the largest displaced populations in the world. Its citizens had faced numerous violations of their rights; they had been forcibly displaced from the occupied territories and had been denied access to their property and possessions, as well as permission to return to their homes.

Internally displaced persons also faced ethnic discrimination, notably as a consequence of the establishment of Armenian settlers in the occupied territories.

74. Azerbaijan had taken significant steps to improve the livelihood of refugees. While during the early years of displacement the majority suffered from grossly inadequate living conditions, they had since been provided with shelters in dozens of regions throughout the country. A State committee had been established to streamline and centralize the Government's efforts to resolve the social challenges faced by refugees and internally displaced persons and a comprehensive legal framework had been adopted. A number of State programmes had been implemented, in addition to the continuation of other relevant activities. As a result of its targeted measures, Azerbaijan's Government had succeeded in closing the last internally displaced persons camp in the country and there had been a decrease of 56 per cent in their poverty rate in recent years. The Government continued to work with international bodies, especially UNHCR, to resolve the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons. In that regard, his country welcomed the visit of the High Commissioner in 2011 as a sign of renewed attention to the situation of protracted displacement in Azerbaijan and took note of the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons in May 2014. Azerbaijan looked forward to following up on their visits and remained supportive of efforts to protect refugees and displaced persons. Renewed attention to that issue was critical for reassuring internally displaced persons that they had not been neglected and for restoring their confidence in justice and the rule of law.

75. **Ms. Šimunić** (Croatia), expressing concern at the record number of refugees registered in 2013 and the displacement of thousands daily as a result of the protracted conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, said that the international community must promote visibility of those humanitarian crises and seek comprehensive, durable and sustainable solutions. International humanitarian response efforts should focus on development, the best tool for preventing the outbreak of conflicts that caused displacement, and capacity-building in host countries and countries of origin. Given that countries of origin were often war-torn areas that faced multiple challenges extending beyond physical infrastructure and job sustainability, efforts to strengthen State institutions and promote reconciliation and tolerance were crucial to achieving

sustainable outcomes. Enhanced cooperation among stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels was essential in that regard.

76. Human rights abuses committed against refugees, including sexual and gender-based violence and forced military recruitment, especially of children, were increasingly prevalent. It was thus paramount that insistence on the inalienability of human rights, irrespective of circumstances, should be maintained. Women and girls were particularly vulnerable to such abuses owing to entrenched gender stereotypes and discriminatory legal frameworks and practices, including denial of access to resources, education and employment, poor reproductive health care and exclusion from decision-making processes. The period following the return of refugees to their countries of origin should therefore be used as an opportunity to address longstanding social inequalities, notably by empowering women as agents of democratic change.

77. Expressing Croatia's deep sympathy for all actors affected by the consequences of the displacement crisis, she said that the UNHCR recommendation for the cessation of refugee status for refugees displaced from Croatia was an acknowledgement of the progress made in resolving that crisis in South-East Europe. Moreover, the high standard applied for the invocation of the cessation clause set a good example for future cessations. The inclusion of that recommendation alongside other recommendations for the advancement of durable solutions was unprecedented and presented an opportunity for the four countries of the region to intensify efforts to implement those solutions at regional and national levels within prescribed timeframes.

78. **Ms. Ilić** (Serbia) said that her country, as the home to the greatest number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Europe, was strongly committed to finding lasting solutions to the problem of protracted displacement in the region. The process of local integration had led to a reduction in the number of internally displaced persons living in Serbia. However, sustainable long-term solutions would require the political will of all actors, especially the countries of origin. Full respect for the rights of all refugees without discrimination and for those of national minorities in the countries of origin, as well as the effective implementation of local laws, were preconditions for sustainable return.

79. Half of the funds needed to implement the Regional Housing Programme led by Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia had been raised. She thanked the donor countries and called on the international community to provide the remaining funds. Serbia had prepared five sub-projects in that context, of which four had been approved, and concluded contracts for donations valued at 87.5 million euros. Her country's ground-breaking efforts had been acknowledged by a symbolic reception at which agreements were signed for building projects in nine municipalities.

80. Solving the long-standing problem of refugees in the region was a process that called for full respect of refugees' rights and needs and could not be achieved through such administrative measures as arbitrary deadlines, as had been clearly demonstrated in the context of Serbia's integration efforts. She reiterated her country's disagreement with the UNHCR recommendation for the cessation of refugee status for refugees from Croatia which, having been issued without consideration for the concerns of all relevant stakeholders, particularly the host countries and refugee-related associations, did not contribute to the quest for durable solutions. Noting that the submission of the progress report on the implementation of the recommendations had been delayed without explanation, she expressed the hope that that report would be objective and duly presented before the UNHCHR Executive Committee.

81. Around 12,000 internally displaced persons had returned to Kosovo and Metohija since 1999, and only a third had achieved a sustainable return. Challenges faced by returnees, including physical abuse and the unlawful occupation of their property, often discouraged return. In that regard, the free choice of internally displaced persons to return or integrate and the guarantee of their full range of rights irrespective of that choice were preconditions for durable solutions. Efforts, particularly on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and international actors in Kosovo and Metohija, must therefore be strengthened to enable the lasting return of those who wished to return to Kosovo and Metohija. In the context of the recently formulated working group on the status of internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia was prepared to consider, in conjunction with relevant international partners, proposals for the durable integration of vulnerable internally displaced persons, for which it would require the support of international donors.

82. **Ms. Obregón** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that better

conflict prevention and resolution, a task primarily incumbent upon States, was required to curb the rise in the number of internally displaced persons, which had reached an unprecedented level. Greater protection of civilians, who faced not only normal risks associated with armed conflict but were often the object of targeted attacks and violence, was also required. Ensuring compliance with humanitarian law, while primarily the responsibility of parties to conflict, was an obligation of all States under the Geneva Conventions, which required them to act during both conflict and peacetime. Improvement of compliance with those norms would significantly reduce the need for civilians to flee their homes and allow them to return home following the cease of hostilities. ICRC reiterated its readiness to support States' efforts in that regard.

83. An integral subset of the civilian population, internally displaced persons, particularly those located in conflict zones or remote locations, were often in need of urgent assistance and lay at the core of the ICRC mandate. In 2014, more than 88 per cent of ICRC food aid beneficiaries were internally displaced; they also accounted for 77 per cent of those who had received essential household items that year. Family reunification was another key area of the work of ICRC. While greater attention had recently been devoted to preventing displacement, efforts to that end had often been construed as preventing the safe relocation of persons who feared for their safety. She emphasized that the individuals concerned were best placed to assess their own security and to decide whether or not to move, barring military or security imperatives. They also had the right to return home in safety as soon as the reason for their displacement ceased to exist. ICRC sought to gain a clear understanding of the causes of displacement and prevailing problems in places of arrival through proximity with relevant communities. In addition to providing assistance, it sought to maintain confidential dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including non-State and armed groups, to prevent further displacement and improve the protection of internally displaced persons. In order to be accepted by parties to conflict and guarantee meaningful dialogue with those parties, ICRC must be understood as an independent and neutral organization, an image that was likewise crucial for ensuring its safety and access to victims. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as its primary partners, also played an important role. Care should therefore be taken not to over-extend their capacities and to ensure that their perception as neutral

organizations was not undermined by the authorities or agents concerned.

84. Though most internally displaced persons resided in relatively safe urban areas, their essential needs were consistently neglected. To respond to those needs, development organizations and government agencies should act as early as possible rather than waiting for conflicts to be resolved. Ensuring the proper functioning of infrastructure and services, such as water-distribution and sanitation systems, healthcare facilities, schools and social protection programmes, helped to prevent huge setbacks to development and lay the foundation for recovery.

85. **Ms. Christensen** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that IFRC commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants was all the more essential at a time when the number of persons fleeing conflict and disaster had reached epic proportions. Increasingly fewer of those persons were able to return home, with the number of safe returns having reached a record low in 2013. The human impact of the large-scale displacement of persons from their homes, communities and possessions, a journey often fraught with danger, must be understood.

86. Increasing displacement levels were overwhelming the capacity of governments, humanitarian organizations and host communities worldwide. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa had reached critical levels and the crisis in Syria continued to drive the displacement of millions. Despite the best efforts of host communities, large-scale displacement put a tremendous strain on basic services and infrastructure in those countries. IFRC national societies were working with host communities to meet the demands of refugees and internally displaced persons in many countries, including Lebanon, which hosted the highest per capita concentration of refugees worldwide, as well as Turkey and Syria, where the Syrian Arab Red Crescent continued to be the main humanitarian actor responding to the needs of displaced people in that country. Though considerable attention had been given to the issue of displacement in conflict situations, it was crucial to recognize the plight of persons in other contexts, particularly those displaced by natural disasters, who, despite being nearly three times more numerous than persons newly displaced by violence and conflict, rarely received international assistance. An increase in extreme weather events resulting from

climate change and urbanization was expected to lead to higher levels of displacement in coming decades. In Bangladesh alone, a one-metre rise in sea levels was expected to cause the displacement of more than 25 million people. Desertification, land degradation and drought were having a severe impact on the livelihoods of millions of small holder farmers and pastoralists, forcing them to leave their lands and seek sustenance elsewhere.

87. Humanitarian organizations could not address the needs of displaced persons alone. Collaboration between humanitarian and development actors in providing support to victims and host communities and finding durable solutions to displacement was necessary. In that regard, IFRC welcomed the High Commissioner's call for strengthened partnerships between those actors and the acknowledgement contained in the upcoming UNHCR resolution of the need to adopt a solution-oriented approach and build the resilience of refugees and their host communities. Given the scale of displacement, it was unfortunate that no relevant targets had survived in the outcome of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The needs of displaced persons must be addressed in the post-2015 development agenda, at least at the indicator level. In that context, universal targets relating to basic services should be measured with disaggregated data to guarantee the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons and thereby ensure a people-centred and inclusive development agenda.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

88. **Mr. Rabi** (Morocco), wishing to provide information on the Tindouf refugee camps that had been omitted by the representative of Algeria, said that those camps had a number of unique and anachronistic features. The only camps in the world that were neither run by UNHCR nor by the host country, they were governed by an armed group with no internationally recognized authority, leaving residents isolated and vulnerable. Those residents were the only refugees in the world for which a census, a prerequisite for all refugee populations and for the implementation of the UNHCR mandate, had been denied by the host country, in violation of international law. The Security Council and UNHCR had repeatedly appealed to Algeria to allow for the census to be conducted. The Security Council had likewise called for a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution to the Western Sahara conflict within the framework of the pacific

settlement of disputes. His country had amply fulfilled its obligations in that regard by submitting a proposal for the autonomy of the Western Sahara, which was welcomed by the Security Council as a serious and credible solution. Morocco would continue to support the upholding of international humanitarian law and protection of the human rights of the Tindouf refugees with a view to encouraging other parties to facilitate a realistic, negotiated and consensual solution to end the precarious and desperate situation of the concerned populations and to shield their youth from terrorist recruitment.

89. **Mr. Sargsyan** (Armenia) said that, while the primary responsibility for assisting refugees and internally displaced persons lay with national Governments, the international community must intervene when Governments were unwilling or unable to provide the necessary aid. In that context, it was deeply regrettable that the refugee situation in Nagorno-Karabakh continued to be used as an instrument of political propaganda and speculation by Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani delegation's habitual exaggeration of relevant data from official reports and international sources did not demonstrate a sincere commitment to addressing the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons and a report by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group had shown its claims regarding Armenian settlers to be groundless. Noting the tendency of Azerbaijani authorities to flaunt their country's substantial oil revenues and military spending, which exceeded Armenia's entire State budget, he could only wonder if the refugee and internally displaced population would be equally impressed.

90. His Government had always pursued practical measures and sustainable solutions to the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons in proportion to its available resources and international cooperation. In addition to its long-term consolidated State policy aimed at improving access to a range of basic resources and services for over half a million persons displaced as a result of Azerbaijan's aggression, Armenia was implementing a social housing action plan for 2012-2013 as part of its full-scale refugee integration policy. His country had greatly benefited from longstanding cooperation with international partners and had developed extensive experience in responding to the needs of refugees, experience that had proven valuable in the context of efforts to settle a recent influx of Syrian refugees. He called upon Azerbaijan to cease

exploiting every agenda item as a platform for State propaganda and anti-Armenian rhetoric and to engage meaningfully in United Nations discussions.

91. **Mr. Chir** (Algeria) said that Algeria had regularly displayed its readiness to resume the census process so that voluntarily repatriated Sahrawi refugees could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in a referendum organized by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). His delegation wished to remind Morocco that UNHCR had begun the pre-registration process in 1997 with a view to holding a referendum that had been accepted by both parties to the conflict and that constituted one of the pillars of the Baker Plan.

92. As for the supposed human rights violations in the refugee camps in Tindouf, the best way to verify the truth of that Moroccan allegation would be to extend the MINURSO mandate to human rights monitoring, something which Morocco had consistently opposed. Both the Sahrawi refugees and the Sahrawis living in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara had the right to international protection, which Moroccan intransigence on human rights monitoring was denying them.

93. **Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan) said that the aggression committed against Azerbaijan had been recognized in the relevant Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993. Armenia was endangering international peace and security by continuing to carry out its illegal acts, denying the right of one million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to return home and misinterpreting the principles of international law. Armenia had grossly violated those principles by seizing and continuing to control Nagorno-Karabakh and other territories of Azerbaijan. Going forward, the primary objective should be to ensure the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the return of displaced persons and the establishment of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Armenia's rejection of that understanding and ongoing violations of international law continued to prevent resolution of the conflict.

94. **Mr. Rabi** (Morocco) wished to remind the representative of Algeria that, at the sixty-fifth session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the High Commissioner had explicitly stated that the mandate of UNHCR was strictly non-political and that

any census it might carry out in the Tindouf refugee camps would have no political implications. Moreover, a recent Human Rights Watch report had underscored Algeria's accountability, in addition to that of the Frente Polisario, for any violations committed by the latter on Algerian territory. To that end, he emphasized Algeria's legal obligation and moral responsibility to protect the rights of the Tindouf refugees. While Morocco had contributed to the development of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution through its autonomy proposal, other parties to the conflict continued to hide behind outdated solutions and exploit the vulnerability of the refugee populations.

95. **Mr. Sargsyan** (Armenia) said that the statements made by the representative of Azerbaijan exemplified his delegation's efforts to politicize and sidetrack discussions under the current agenda item. With more than 21 years since the adoption of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Azerbaijani delegation had had more than enough time to read and understand them. The massacres of 1988-1990 had driven half a million Armenians out of Azerbaijan, inflicting physical and psychological damage and depriving them of property. He asked Azerbaijan's delegation to account for that missing property and emphasized that the Armenian Government had consistently dealt with that issue in an apolitical, non-speculative manner and with great determination. He noted observations by independent experts that the Azerbaijani authorities frequently exploited the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons to counter criticism of its repressive domestic policies and to discredit the claims and concerns of human rights organizations.

96. **Mr. Chir** (Algeria) reiterated that a census was essential to bringing about a political solution to the Western Sahara conflict. Despite the adoption, since 1975, of multiple international resolutions calling for a referendum, a measure that would enable the registration of Sahrawi refugees, none had yet been conducted. He wished to point out that a number of reports had been issued which highlighted the human rights violations committed by Morocco in the Western Sahara.

97. **Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan) said that Armenia continued to ignore calls by the Security Council for immediate negotiations for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from the occupied areas of Azerbaijan and the return of

refugees and displaced persons to their homes in security and dignity. The time had finally come for the Armenian delegation to read the relevant resolutions.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.