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Official Records

President: Mr. Lykketoft (Denmark)

In the absence of the President, Mr. González Franco (Paraguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 130 (continued)

Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum-seekers

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Filippo Grandi on his election by the General Assembly last Wednesday as the next United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I wish him success in his new endeavour and reiterate Brazil's willingness to continue its fluid dialogue and cooperation with UNHCR.

Alongside other agencies and organizations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been playing a pivotal role in assisting millions of people in need in the context of a refugee crisis that has had no parallel since the Second World War. In the face of that enormous challenge, the leadership of Mr. António Guterres has been of crucial importance, and I would like to convey our deep appreciation for his tireless efforts and dedication over the past 10 years to the cause of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless people.

Given the magnitude of the current crisis, it is necessary for the entire international community to offer protection to those in need, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. Brazil welcomes the efforts

undertaken by host countries in the context of the Syrian crisis. The generous acceptance of more than 4 million refugees by Syria's neighbours deserves our warmest and most profound recognition. We agree with the High Commissioner that front-line countries bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis in the Middle East deserve special consideration and support. The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, which is aimed at building longer-term resilience among host communities and refugees, is an important tool, both for the protection of refugees and for the promotion of durable solutions in those countries. We also take note with appreciation of the measures adopted by the European Union regarding the reception of refugees by its member States. Addressing the dramatic situation of those risking their lives to reach European shores will continue to demand a resolute commitment by European States and institutions.

Brazil, for its part, has also been contributing, within its means, to the global humanitarian response to massive forced displacement. Since 2013, Brazilian consulates in the Middle East have been issuing special visas under simplified procedures to people affected by the Syrian conflict for travel to Brazil, where they can present an asylum claim. On that basis, over 2,200 Syrians have been formally recognized as refugees in Brazil. In October, the Government of Brazil and UNHCR signed an agreement to enhance and formalize cooperation to make that mechanism more efficient and secure, including through the exchange of information and expertise in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Cooperation activities have already begun, and

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we expect our partnership with UNHCR to enable more Syrians to find a new home on Brazilian territory.

At the regional level, Brazil hosted a ministerial meeting in December 2014 to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, during which a plan of action to enhance protection and harmonize policy across Latin America was adopted, thereby improving our regional framework for the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless people.

The world was shocked by the outrageous terrorist attacks recently perpetrated in France, Kenya, Egypt, Turkey, Nigeria, Lebanon and, last Friday, in Mali. Brazil condemns those barbaric acts in the strongest possible terms and reiterates its firm repudiation of any form of terrorism, regardless of its motivation.

We should not let the refugee crisis become a pretext for restrictive policies, nor should we allow terrorism to dictate limits to efforts aimed at providing shelter for people forcibly displaced by war and other humanitarian emergencies. It is paramount to preserve the integrity of the asylum system. Terrorists are not eligible for asylum. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is very clear in that respect, to the point of completely excluding from its scope people who have committed serious crimes. We must also bear in mind that the overwhelming majority of those coming to Europe are fleeing persecution or the life-threatening effects of conflict. In several cases, they are trying to escape from the very groups responsible for tragedies such as the ones witnessed in Paris, Beirut and Yola.

In the face of terror and despair, it will be necessary for us all to renew our commitment to the core values behind the creation of the United Nations and, above all, to our own humanity. Closing doors will not be an option.

Mr. Jinga (Romania) (*spoke in French*): Romania associates itself with the statement made by Mr. Vale de Almeida last Friday on behalf of the European Union (see A/70/PV.59). I would now like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

At the outset, allow me to thank the President for organizing this extremely timely debate, the subject of which is of global importance. At the moment, there are over 60 million refugees throughout the world, half of whom are children. Since the beginning of the year, approximately 750,000 persons have crossed the Mediterranean; of these, over 3,400 have been recorded

as fatalities. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has presented disturbing statistics to demonstrate that those coming from Syria and other areas affected by armed conflict represent a serious humanitarian problem. The increase in the number of refugees is closely linked to the unstable security environment and the proliferation of conflicts throughout the world. Since the beginning of the year, the number of migration flows to Europe have been increasing on a daily basis, testing our ability to assist those who are fleeing from violence and seeking shelter. Those migration flows are a challenge that must remain at the forefront of our political agenda. Given their social, political and economic implications, it is imperative that we work together to identify and implement the appropriate instruments. We need a new, comprehensive approach, for no country alone can resolve a problem that has become international.

Such an approach is even more necessary in the case of Syria. Cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is central to any solution to that situation. The experience that UNHCR has acquired over its nearly 65 years of activity gives it the necessary expertise with regard to both temporary protection and social integration. Unfortunately, that is no longer enough. In order to manage the challenges of global mobility, we need an equitable sharing of responsibilities and increased cooperation regarding immigration policies. In that respect, the Valletta summit provided a realistic prospect for extensive dialogue between the European Union and its partners on the African continent. I would merely add that Romania has underscored the importance of a common response in which the contribution of our partners in Africa is vital if we are to put a halt to illegal migration, strengthen the adoption and implementation of readmission agreements and improve legal decision-making in order to continue along the path to development.

I would like to reiterate the need to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugees, in accordance with international treaties. Accordingly, particular attention must be paid to the treatment and reintegration of women and children affected by crisis and of the victims of trafficking or abuse. In 2008, Romania established the Emergency Transit Centre in Timisoara with the support of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. The centre was the first of its kind to be established in the world, and the more than 1,700 refugees who have come through its doors since its inception attest to its

usefulness. My country actively participates with its European Union partners in the search for solutions to the unprecedented challenge that we are currently facing, in a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility. We also participate in the efforts of the international community to alleviate the suffering caused by the humanitarian situation. On that account, Romania has increased its contribution to the budget of UNHCR and that of the World Food Programme. At the same time, we continue to provide humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees both at the bilateral level and through specific United Nations programmes, while according special attention to the refugee camps in Jordan.

Last Thursday, during the informal debate, we learned that whereas in 2000 12 per cent of the planet's population was living in conflict areas, today that statistic is 43 per cent, and in 2030 it will be 70 per cent. It is absolutely imperative that we stop that spiral. In order to mobilize more resources to manage the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the Secretary-General has announced an international conference scheduled to take place in London on 4 February 2016. He also has announced a high-level meeting on immigrants and refugees, scheduled for next September in New York. Those are excellent initiatives that can contribute to solving the root causes of the challenge before us. At the same time, for the long term, it is essential to ensure the sustainable development of the countries concerned, because the solution to the problem is not to increase the number of donors, but to reduce the requests for assistance. Once again, in that regard, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) can make the difference.

Mr. Bishnoi (India): I thank the President for convening this debate and giving the matter the attention it deserves. I also thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his briefing (see A/70/PV.59).

At the outset, my delegation wishes to commend the leadership of the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, whose guidance spanning more than 10 years has ensured that the interests of refugees are given due attention. I also take this opportunity to welcome the election of Mr. Filippo Grandi as the next United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to assure him of our full support. We are confident that the vast experience and deep understanding that he brings to the task will be extremely useful in handling refugee crises in a humane and dignified manner.

It has been noted by the High Commissioner for Refugees that the numbers have never been as staggering as they are now, since the Second World War, with some 60 million displaced as a result of war and persecution. Nearly 20 million are refugees, with just over half of them children. No less poignant is the 4,300 lives that were lost when people were crossing the Mediterranean last year, and the 3,511 lives this year. The Mediterranean is truly the most dangerous border crossing in the world today. It is also a fact that the refugee crisis may be here to stay with us for a while. It is truly a humanitarian crisis of exceptional proportions. The moral implications of the manner in which we handle it will be equally significant. We need to deal with the issue of refugees in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In order to put things in perspective, please allow me to highlight the statement of the High Commissioner for Refugees, which he gave on 4 September.

“This is a primarily refugee crisis, not only a migration phenomenon. The vast majority of those arriving in Greece come from conflict zones like Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan and are simply running for their lives. All people on the move in these tragic circumstances deserve to see their human rights and dignity fully respected, independently of their legal status. But we cannot forget the particular responsibility all States have vis-à-vis refugees, in accordance with international law.”

Saving lives, providing protection and upholding human dignity cannot but be the first priority. There is a need to maintain open borders, not close them. We also need to recognize that tragic deaths at sea occur solely because of the lack of safe passage. If land routes were available, asylum-seekers would not have to take to the sea. We also need to refrain from the temptation to reduce the benefits available to asylum-seekers in order to discourage them from seeking succour. It is also important that we do not speak the language of racism and xenophobia.

Countries of the region have given shelter to more than 4 million refugees from Syria. They in fact make up a significant proportion of the population in those countries. While those countries host the bulk of the refugees, however, their contributions are not monetized. There is therefore a tendency for them to go unrecognized. The international community needs to be conscious of the need to support those who bear the

greatest burden. It should match in global partnership the solidarity, hospitality and compassion shown by the countries of the region.

When considering donor countries hosting refugees, we understand that support for refugees is counted as official development assistance (ODA) by some States. Some States also reduce their ODA budgets by nearly 20 per cent on account of costs incurred in meeting their obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. We know that it is permitted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. There is perhaps a case for the General Assembly to take a look at this.

I would like to say a few words about the Security Council and its resolution 2240 (2015). One should not be faulted if reading the resolution leads one to conclude that those risking their lives crossing the Mediterranean are doing so out of greed for pecuniary gain and not to escape persecution and death. The boats that they use, the resolution would lead us to believe, constitute a threat to international peace and security; and they therefore need to be seized and destroyed. To us, it would seem that the Council has decreed that people cannot flee for their lives unless they use vessels whose seaworthiness meets the standards set by the International Maritime Organization. Is that what is meant by the right to protection? By securitizing refugee movements, the Council has legitimized a response that is morally challenging in extraordinary proportions. It is ironic that the crisis was actually created by the Council through its acts of omission in failing to fulfil a responsibility reposed in it by the larger membership to find a political solution to the conflict. The need for reform speaks for itself.

Erecting fences to keep out refugees undermines the notion of common humanity and the concept of the United Nations. But we also see some receiving countries showing empathy and compassion. Those receiving countries will, we hope, define the international response. By doing so, they will further validate our commitment to the Organization.

Mr. Mendonça e Moura (Portugal): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this timely meeting.

Portugal shares the views expressed by the observer of the European Union (see A/70/PV.59).

The inclusion of this new item on the General Assembly's agenda confirms that today no single

State can alone respond to the challenges posed by international migration. The growing number of persons who every day are forced to abandon their countries demands from the international community a comprehensive reflection on new approaches to address the current migratory and refugee crisis. Migrations are actually a global challenge that require a collective response. The unprecedented scale of the migration crisis calls for comprehensive, integrated and concerted policies. Any approach must be built on respect for international law and human rights law and based on solidarity, ownership and shared responsibility. We believe that successful results can be achieved only by strengthened cooperation and effective partnerships among countries of origin, transit and destiny, notably involving international and regional organizations.

Recently, European and African leaders met in Valletta in a joint effort to find common solutions to address the challenges posed by the sharply increased flows of refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin. In a true spirit of partnership, all aspects of migration were considered. We jointly agreed on concrete and operational measures and look forward to their swift implementation.

Portugal will continue to assume its responsibilities. We have been actively involved in the relevant initiatives of the European Union, including the partnership for mobility and the common agendas for migration and mobility. The issue of migration has also been among our priorities within the framework of the 5+5 Dialogue on Migration in the Western Mediterranean, which brings together countries from both margins of the Mediterranean. We were co-founders of the Khartoum process, and at present Portugal is one of the co-Chairs of the steering committee of the Rabat process. The promotion of a strong partnership between Europe and Africa is a long-standing priority for my country.

Furthermore, Portugal is also committed to assuming its responsibilities towards those seeking protection, especially Syrian asylum-seekers. We very recently received a group of Syrian refugees that had fled their country and sought protection in one of the countries of the region, Egypt. Even before recognizing the importance of access to education for students from fragile and conflict countries, Portugal supported the initiative of former President Jorge Sampaio, the Global Platform for Syrian Students, and will continue to support the efforts to develop a rapid-response mechanism for higher education in emergencies.

The consequences of this humanitarian crisis are not predictable. Our collective response must be swift and determined, and we must focus our concerted actions on enhancing international stability and security. The adequate management of migration flows, granting security for both migrants and refugees, but also for hosting communities, is of the utmost importance. Fear can become a major obstacle among populations, and must be overcome through adequate security measures.

At the same time, the eradication of poverty and the promotion of social and economic development have to be maintained at the top of our agenda. The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) must remain a priority for all of us, as should be the promotion of urgently needed political solutions to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and in Africa. Security and development are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. One cannot be achieved without the other. We should not forget that their absence is a significant obstacle that prevents those who seek either protection or better living conditions outside their own countries from attaining their fundamental rights.

Finally, allow me to recall the valuable contribution made by migrants and refugees, not only to economic growth and human development in both home and host countries, but also to the enrichment of our societies by fostering understanding and respect among peoples, cultures and societies, thereby serving to strengthen the notion of common humanity.

Mr. Marani (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Last year the number of people displaced due to conflict and persecution reached 60 million, its highest level since the Second World War. Of that total, 21 million people were forced to seek refuge or asylum in host countries. More than 38 million men, women and children were displaced internally, far from their homes, communities and, very often, their means of support. The trend is all the more disturbing when we read in the annual report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/70/12) that the number of refugees able to return home in 2014 — approximately 127,000 — was the lowest since 1983.

Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Argentina has stressed in this and other forums that all parties to the conflict should put an end to the violence and should cease human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. We have also highlighted the need for all those responsible

for atrocities to be held accountable. But we cannot overlook the fact that the catastrophic humanitarian and human rights situation faced by Syrian society today is the result of the uninterrupted militarization of the conflict and the increasing violence being committed against the civilian population by those who wish to impose their will through the use of arms.

In October 2014, in the framework of our national migration act, Argentina launched a humanitarian visa programme for those affected by the Syrian conflict. The act establishes the essential and inalienable right of a person to migrate — a right guaranteed by the Argentine Republic on the basis of the principles of equality and universality. Similarly, a few years ago, within the framework of the National Refugee Commission, Argentina established an accelerated procedure, applicable in cases such as that of Syria, for those who request refugee status upon reaching our country. Where there is a clear need for protection, cases are resolved in a matter of days, and the documentation is processed at no charge, with the applicants enjoying the same civil, social and economic rights as Argentine citizens.

Women constitute more than half of the population of refugees. Although already vulnerable owing to their status as displaced persons, women face even greater difficulties, even after reaching an apparently safe place. Some women are persecuted for failure to respect standards or customs or are coerced into early or forced marriage. There is also the risk of sexual violence, including in the places where women seek protection. Factors such as age, national origin, ethnicity, religious or linguistic status and sexual orientation, among others, could expose them to the risk of additional discrimination and insecurity.

Also disturbingly high is the number of children and adolescents in search of refuge who are unaccompanied or separated from their families. In 2014, there were 34,300 requests for asylum from unaccompanied children or children separated from their families in 82 countries. That was the highest number since the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees began to collect such data, in 2006. In that regard, we wish to recall the December 2014 adoption of the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, in which 28 countries from the region agreed to work together to uphold the highest standards of protection at the regional and international levels, to implement innovative solutions for refugees and displaced persons and to put an end

to the plight faced by stateless persons throughout the region.

Argentina reaffirms and acknowledges the fact that, despite the complexity of current international migration flows, refugees cannot be confused with migrants, in either legal or conceptual terms. Let us not forget that the right to migrate can be defined as the voluntary principle of a person to seek development where the possibilities for life are more favourable or stable, whereas refugees find themselves in an extreme situation and must urgently find a safe place in which to preserve their lives. Equally, we feel it is important to point out that, although no country is exempt from the phenomenon, regardless of its level of development or international status, the reality is that developing countries, which hosted 86 per cent of the world's refugees in 2014, in comparison with 70 per cent 10 years ago, are disproportionately affected.

The humanitarian response is undoubtedly important. We must continue to improve conditions for refugees, who desperately require international protection, including by ensuring better conditions in refugee camps and by guaranteeing their most basic rights. However, that is merely an emergency response. Only political will and cooperation with a view to achieving peace and development can achieve the changes necessary to eliminate the underlying factors that prompt an ever-increasing number of men, women and children around the world to abandon their communities and everything familiar to them in order to be able to safeguard their lives, physical integrity and freedom.

Mr. Perović (Montenegro): I would like to begin by thanking President Lykketoft for convening this meeting, the subject of which is very important. The efforts made by the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies to keep this issue on the agenda are valuable, in that they help us to recognize the need for support in addressing the migration crisis in Europe and in helping thousands of refugees, especially those fleeing from Syria.

A few months ago, the international community came together in New York to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals, which recognize the key role that migration plays in the overall development and prosperity of countries of origin and destination. At the same time, the world faces the highest level of irregular displacement since the Second World War, one of the

consequences of which is the alarming mortality rate among refugees and migrants making their way to a safer destination. The fact is that more than 500,000 people, the majority of whom are Syrian refugees, have fled their homes and crossed the Mediterranean in order to secure a better future in Europe. Those horrifying facts make it clear that the international community has a legal and moral responsibility to put an end to the migration crisis. It is a responsibility that humankind must shoulder.

However, we cannot overcome that challenge without a comprehensive approach that tackles both the root causes and the consequences of the problem. We are fully aware that a resolution cannot be achieved overnight, particularly given the scale of the crisis and of the suffering of the Syrian people. The best we can do is to join our efforts to strengthen the humanitarian response in order to save lives, repel exploitative criminal gangs and restore hope to those fleeing for their lives. Special attention should be paid to the large number of people belonging to highly vulnerable groups who face starvation, illness, dehydration and abuse at the hands of smugglers.

We must not underestimate the fact that many fall victim to illegal acts committed by officers of border services and that, with the onset of winter, hypothermia will become a new challenge.

States should be prepared for the challenges of migrant flows by providing needed support to those passing through its territory or across its borders, or seeking asylum. That is an essential element of sustainability and ensures the improved security of migrants. The provision of medical care, food and shelter, the organization of transport and the arrangement of special care for vulnerable groups are the minimum that each State should be prepared to ensure. In that regard, we need to step up operational cooperation and work more closely with a view to sharing information and intelligence on irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking in human beings.

We also need more effective border management and a more sensitive approach when it comes to the issue of returns, since sending back asylum-seekers who have escaped war and terror cannot be a legitimate option.

Support for Syria's neighbours — Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan — is also necessary. Despite the enormous pressure that migrants pose to their economies, they

have remained crucial pillars of peace and stability in the region.

Statistics show that Syrian refugees prefer to take the Balkan route, as it is safer. But they still face huge risks before they arrive safely at their final destinations. Montenegro welcomes all initiatives aimed at making good use of existing multilateral cooperation frameworks to address both the consequences and the root causes of the problem. Although the routes taken by the migrants do not currently pass through my country, preparatory measures for the changes that will eventually affect Montenegro have already been adopted.

We must never forget that the high rates of refugees and migrants are a consequence of much deeper problems — gross violations of human rights, grave conflicts and political repression. No single State can effectively manage the migration crisis alone. We also need to rethink the way the world finances the response to humanitarian crises. Such a response should include a much closer interrelationship between humanitarian and development interventions. Development actors have to be given more flexibility and better tools to act early and quickly, to stabilize and to build resilience. We must join our efforts to provide more comprehensive responses in fulfilling our international obligations. By doing so, we will be able to make the world a safer place. Only when we link together humanitarian and development issues in our national policies and international efforts will we be able to perceive international migration as a positive force.

Montenegro will play its part alongside its European partners. We remain committed to protecting every migrant who arrives at our borders, passes through or seeks asylum. We will continue to promote and implement universal values and international legal obligations through full respect for the human rights and dignity of migrants. And we will remain a responsible partner in all resolute international efforts that, in solidarity and compassion, are aimed at providing safe and legal channels of migration in accordance with international law.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): At the outset, allow me to thank the President for organizing this timely and important debate.

Slovenia also aligns itself with the statement (see A/70/PV.59) delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU).

The recent terrorist brutality in Bamako, Nigeria, Paris, Beirut and the Sinai have reminded us once again that the international community urgently needs to forge a united response in its fight against radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism. Many people are forced to flee their homes because of the violence of war and of terrorist groups. In the last few years, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in mass displacement, which has reached levels unprecedented in history. While recognizing that mass displacement is a global phenomenon, we welcome this opportunity to discuss the situation in the Mediterranean, a region of which my country is also part. We cannot simply be observers of human tragedies and suffering at the doorstep of Europe and in other parts of the world; we have to play an active role in that regard.

We should strengthen all efforts to find solutions to the migration and refugee situation. In trying to find a solution, we must remember that fundamental human rights are universal and indivisible, and therefore apply equally to all, including migrants and refugees. Furthermore, refugees enjoy a special status under international law.

In Slovenia we have first-hand information about how important it is to have close regional and international cooperation. For the last few weeks, Slovenia has been confronted with an immense refugee and migration flow along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan migration route. In the past 10 days alone, more than a quarter of a million people have passed through Slovenia, a country of 2 million people. We are doing our utmost to manage the migration flow and to protect people in need, especially the most vulnerable groups, as well as to guarantee security. We appreciate the assistance of the States members of the European Union, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration and others in those efforts.

The fact remains that we have to manage migration more effectively. That responsibility cannot fall on one country alone — it must be shared by the international community. Political dialogue and practical cooperation among the countries of origin, transit and destination need to be strengthened. A sustainable solution can be found only by tackling the root causes of migration, such as violence, conflict, human rights abuses, poverty, a lack of good governance and rule of law, unemployment, especially among youth, and the impacts of climate

change. I know that those causes sound familiar. The Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) are aimed at addressing them too. That is an additional reason why we need to implement the Agenda successfully and without any hesitation.

We should join our efforts not to stop migration — which has always existed and will always exist, and which has been a factor in the development of human civilization — but to promote legal migration and mobility while combating irregular migration and the trafficking and smuggling of human beings.

Slovenia is taking an active part in the EU operation in the Mediterranean Sea to find and dismantle the smuggling and trafficking networks in the Central Mediterranean. Last week's European Union summit on African migration, held in Valletta, also resulted in a commitment that we should manage migration flows in all their aspects together, guided by the principle of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility.

In conclusion, the current global migration and refugee situation is a stark reminder to all of us that we need to accelerate our efforts to use all of the available solutions to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration and to safeguard the positive effects of migration on development. We look forward to contributing to the discussion leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit next May in Turkey.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting on global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin.

In the past few years, the Mediterranean basin has witnessed a considerable increase in the numbers of those fleeing their countries and seeking refuge elsewhere. Their flight is attributed to the spread of armed conflicts, which make it hard for them to continue their lives in the affected areas. In addition, the information issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicates that the vast majority of refugees cross the Mediterranean to enter Europe via its southern shore. That alone constitutes a threat to their lives. In that regard, we would like to call upon all the relevant agencies to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety and security of refugees. We call upon all the States concerned to live up to their responsibility.

It is regrettable that the information issued by UNHCR indicates that there is an unprecedented

increase in the number of those who lost their lives in the Mediterranean. The statistic pertains to the first three months of 2015: 479, as compared with only 15 during the same period in 2014. The number of people who lost their lives last April increased to 1,308. The international community should ensure that such a tragic experience is not repeated.

At this juncture, my delegation would like to express its gratitude to the European Union and its member States for the assistance and support they have provided to refugee-related operations in the Mediterranean. We hope that such support will be ongoing. I especially refer to action that is in accordance with the recommendations of UNHCR, including ensuring the safety of refugees crossing the Mediterranean, improving reception facilities for refugees, enhancing the relevant legal frameworks and ensuring collective action. Special attention should be given to security requirements. We stress the importance of providing refugees with basic services such as health care, education and equal job opportunities.

The Sudan is hosting a considerable number of refugees and asylum-seekers from countries that are experiencing instability in the region. Those figures cannot be underestimated. Some of them are also affected by environmental degradation, which has been ongoing for a number of years. We have been providing decent jobs for them and allowing them to live a life of dignity. The Sudan had been hosting our brethren from South Sudan even before the outbreak of the fighting two years ago. They are not treated like other refugees in the Sudan. On the contrary, they enjoy citizenship rights in accordance with an initiative by His Excellency the President.

We hosted a very important regional conference on refugees issues, which resulted in the Khartoum declaration. International organizations and specialized agencies, including UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, are following up on the declaration and beginning implementation. In order to find appropriate solutions to the refugee crisis and reduce fatalities, we need to address the root causes that are the drivers of massive migrant flows, namely, armed conflicts, natural disasters and political crises. All of those factors contribute to creating an environment conducive to instability. In that regard, the United Nations must start to take all the necessary measures to find appropriate solutions through its specialized agencies and its various bodies, namely, UNHCR.

Mr. Grant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes the official debate on this item held on 20 November (see A/70/PV.59), as well as today's.

We would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Turkey for having drawn the attention of the international community to an issue that currently affects millions of people throughout the world, particularly in the Mediterranean. The current crisis in the Mediterranean is one of many serious situations of forced migration and protracted displacement in the world. Forced displacements at the international level are reaching unprecedented proportions not seen since the Second World War. Nearly half of the world's refugees are in situations of prolonged displacement — mostly in developing countries — and nearly half of the refugees in situations of forced displacement are children. Today, however, our debate is focused on the plight of Syrian refugees.

The Canadian Government is concerned about the ongoing situation in the Mediterranean, where refugees are often risking their lives on their journey to reach Europe. In the light of the situation, the member States of the international community must work together to take action. In December 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, appealed for States to mobilize and receive 130,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016. Owing to the generous response of many States, including Canada, promises of resettlement and other forms of humanitarian admission now exceed the goal set. Millions of Syrians are living in an exile that is increasingly prolonged in the countries of their initial asylum. But we need to do much more. Looking ahead, Canada believes that the time has now come for the international community to reinvigorate its efforts to provide solutions and set new, more ambitious goals to provide opportunities for resettlement and humanitarian admission to Syrian refugees.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada acknowledges the tremendous burden being carried by the countries already welcoming and hosting significant refugee populations fleeing the conflict in Syria, and Canada is stepping up to help. Our Government has reiterated its commitment to resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees without compromising security. In addition, Canada has committed to providing an immediate, new \$100 million contribution to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to support the critical relief activities in Syria and

the surrounding area. That is in addition to the more than \$800 million in humanitarian, development and security assistance Canada has committed to date in response to the crisis in Syria.

Looking beyond the Mediterranean, Canada remains deeply concerned about the rising levels of global displacement and the increasing gap between needs and the resources available to meet them. Our collective action is required to ensure that the necessary protection and assistance are in place for the countless families — men, women and children — forced from their communities. There is a need to build a global comprehensive approach to forced migration and refugee protection that includes efforts to support vulnerable people in their countries of origin and asylum through humanitarian, development and peacebuilding support and to address root causes in countries of origin, such as conflict, persecution, human rights abuses and violations. Canada is committed to ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected and that their needs are being met. We continue to support international refugee-protection efforts through humanitarian and development funding as well as resettlement initiatives. In that regard, Canada will remain engaged on the issue and looks forward to upcoming discussions, including the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 as a forum to propel international efforts in support of refugees and their hosts.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Allow me at the outset to express our appreciation for the convening of this timely meeting of such critical importance.

Day by day, our world is becoming more fragile, as the humanitarian consequences of ongoing conflicts remain tremendously high. The recent refugee crisis is of a magnitude not seen since the Second World War, as 60 million people — half of them children — have been forced to leave their homes due to conflict and violence. That sharp increase is not observed only in the number of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers, but also in their increased humanitarian needs, which if left unmet could lead to even more serious consequences.

The Syrian crisis has produced the world's largest humanitarian tragedy. Nearly half of the country's population has been displaced and more than 4 million people have fled the country. As the process continues with an uncertain end date, it leaves behind unprecedented challenges for the countries of origin, transit and destination. Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and all first-asylum countries have generously

supported millions of suffering, desperate people. As the Secretary-General underlined in his briefing on Friday, “having so few countries bear the global responsibility is simply not a sustainable solution” (A/70/PV.59, p.2). We fully subscribe to that view and underline the importance of responsibility and burden-sharing in relation to refugee matters. The five priority areas outlined by the Secretary-General constitute an important comprehensive approach to tackling the crisis.

While pursuing migration policies, States must take an inclusive approach and avoid applying discriminatory, xenophobic policies towards migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Addressing the negative perceptions of migrants within host communities is a key element of promoting integration and enhancing development.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned at the fact that the Government of the Republic of Armenia has encouraged and facilitated the resettlement of Armenians from Syria in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, particularly in the occupied Zangilan, Lachin and Khojaly districts. Information attesting to Armenia’s intentional acts is widely available, not only across international sources but also within Armenia’s own national media outlets. Clearly, the true intention of that country is far from humanitarian. Under the slogan of humanism and solidarity, Armenia has capitalized on the tragic situation of Syrian refugees to advance its expansionist and aggressive agenda. Such acts constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and Protocols Additional. The international community and, first of all, those responsible by mandate should take all necessary steps to halt Armenia’s illegal practices and hold it accountable.

Despite the burden of some 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons caused by the Armenian aggression against my country and its social and economic consequences, my country has made its contribution to dealing with the current refugee crisis. In addition, in 2012 the Republic of Azerbaijan, through its international development aid agency, provided direct financial aid to help Syrian refugees settled in Jordan. My country will continue its efforts to contribute to mitigating the recent crisis.

Two month ago, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1), which, when implemented, promises to make the world

a better place for everyone, leaving no one behind. From that point of view, the current crisis constitutes a great opportunity for nations to turn their aspirations into concrete actions. The recent massive movement of people is rooted in conflicts, political crises, governance failures and abject poverty. We need above all to prevent potential conflicts and resolve those that already exist, because tackling the root causes of conflicts is the only way to enable us to decrease demand for humanitarian aid and not force us to increase the supply.

Mr. Alyas (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank the President for convening this important debate on the “Global awareness of the tragedies of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum-seekers”, an issue that stands at the forefront of the humanitarian and security concerns of the international community.

We are facing an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stresses that the crisis now encompasses nearly 20 million refugees and 40 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Those are staggering numbers. Day after day, in the face of the lack of financing and the absence of appropriate protection mechanisms, the Syrian crisis represents the greatest humanitarian crisis of the twenty-first century. Having reached 4 million, according to UNHCR, the number of migrants represents half of Syria’s population, while the number of displaced is more than 7.5 million, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The waves of refugees fleeing Syria to neighbouring countries pose a significant challenge to our attempt to respond to their basic needs, whether providing shelter, health care or educational services in a way that preserves the refugees’ dignity and protects them.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is ever ready to cooperate with United Nations organs in addressing this deteriorating humanitarian crisis. We will work to find appropriate mechanisms for protection, as well as the necessary and adequate financial assistance, while also providing assistance to host countries. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has hosted 2.5 million Syrian refugees, taking care not to treat them as refugees or to house them in refugee camps out of respect for their dignity and security. We allow them freedom of movement and permit those who so wish — numbering in the hundreds of thousands — to remain in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom has raised their status to that of other residents and accorded them the same rights, including to free health care, employment and education. The number of Syrian students receiving free education has reached approximately 100,00.

The Kingdom's efforts have not been limited to receiving and hosting our Syrian brothers following their humanitarian tragedy. They also include support for millions of Syrian refugees in neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere. These efforts include providing humanitarian assistance, financial or in kind, in coordination with the Governments of the host countries and international humanitarian relief organizations. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's total humanitarian aid to our Syrian brethren has now reached around \$700 million, according to statistics from the third international donor conference, held in Kuwait on 31 March. It is directed to supporting humanitarian efforts in Syria and includes Government assistance as well as a popular national campaign in support of our Syrian brothers, launched in 2011.

Our humanitarian assistance also includes the provision of food, health care, shelter and educational services, including specialized Saudi clinics set up in various refugee camps, of which the most significant is the Zaatari camp in Jordan, as well as cross-border camps. They furnish essential medical services, including vaccinations, preventive care and surgical operations. We have also supported special camps sheltering many Syrian families suffering from various humanitarian issues, in both Lebanon and Syria.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is very concerned about the inhuman racist and hostile rhetoric aimed at refugees in general and Muslims in particular. We call on all countries, humanitarian institutions, civil society organizations and the media to rise above such discourse, help raise awareness and take on the responsibility of providing necessary protection to the forced migrants and refugees who are fleeing the persecution of unjust authorities and terrorist groups. My delegation would like to emphasize a number of important points in that regard.

First, we should work on taking practical steps to address this humanitarian crisis rather than limit ourselves to issuing statements of sympathy and concern. Secondly, we should not allow the fear induced by threats of terrorist attacks and the shocking escalation of racist speech to overwhelm our spirit of solidarity with refugees and our willingness to provide them with

protection against persecution and discrimination, in accordance with international law and humanitarian standards. Thirdly, we must work to create appropriate international mechanisms that accord with the principle of burden-sharing among countries.

In conclusion, the most important thing we can do to solve the problem of refugees is to tackle and address the root causes that drive them from their homelands, foremost among them political crises. We therefore reiterate our call for undertaking serious efforts to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, based on the final Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (A/66/865, annex). These efforts should be immediate and practical, and we should not be content with slogans or to act in contradiction to the will of the people of Syria and thereby prolong this humanitarian tragedy and add to the flood of Syrian refugees.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's thanks to the President for convening this important and timely meeting.

The global migration crisis has spiked acutely, most recently in Europe, as well as in various other regions that include South-East Asia. The massive influx of irregular migrants and refugees that European countries are facing presents a real and ever-growing challenge. More than 300,000 people have risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea, and many more continue to follow them. More than 2,500 have lost their lives in attempting the crossing. Even after they arrive on Europe's shores and borders, uncertainties still lie ahead as they continue their journey.

One of the main causes of this is the protracted crisis in Syria. When problems arose in Syria four years ago, many thought these were merely symptoms of an unrest that would soon be over. But over time the situation has become one of complicated armed conflict that has caused many civilians unthinkable suffering. More than 4.2 million Syrians have fled the country, and neighbouring countries in the region are bearing an enormous burden. Of all the migrants who reached the Mediterranean in 2015, more than 50 per cent are Syrians who should have the right to seek asylum without discrimination of any kind. This already grave situation has worsened since the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) has gained ground, grown stronger and resorted to terror, and last week's heinous attacks in Paris have now presented refugee-receiving countries with a new dilemma of whether to shift their stance from compassion to security.

Indonesia believes that no country can solve this problem alone. It is not just a regional challenge, it is a global one that requires collective global solutions and an effective regional strategy. I would like to share our views and perspectives on the way forward to finding a solution to the problem of refugees. The first thing to be done is to address its root causes. The international community should redouble its efforts to end the crisis in Syria without delay. The situation will only get worse if a political solution is not reached soon.

Secondly, counter-terrorism efforts to deal with so-called ISIS in relation to the conflict in Syria will be best carried out in a coordinated manner, and should be aligned with strategies aimed at resolving the conflict by political means. Furthermore, all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that the counter-terrorism efforts do not undermine humanitarian efforts to tackle the refugee crisis produced by the conflict.

Thirdly, we must strengthen international cooperation to ensure that the neighbouring countries that are hosting most of the refugees are receiving sustained support. With no political solution in sight, millions have fled, most of them to Syria's neighbours and many to Europe, while some have reached the shores of other regions, including South-East Asia. Enhancing coordination between the affected countries and the international community is essential if we are to ease the burden of the affected countries, based on the principles of burden sharing and shared responsibility.

Fourthly, it is essential to promote common approaches and policies for dealing with the crisis. Europe is facing its biggest refugee incursion in decades, and it has no choice but to honour its international obligations under the relevant international instruments relating to refugees.

Fifthly, in addressing the multidimensional challenges of irregular migration, a comprehensive approach should include strengthening law enforcement and prosecuting those responsible for smuggling and trafficking in persons and for transnational organized crime, while at the same time respecting human rights and humanitarian principles in order to protect the victims. Lastly, in the long run, conflict prevention and the promotion of sustainable peace are always key to avoiding humanitarian crises and irregular migrations.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the President for organizing this discussion on the subject of "Global awareness of the tragedies

of irregular migrants in the Mediterranean basin, with specific emphasis on Syrian asylum-seekers".

Migration is one of the constants of human history. This issue is extremely timely in the light of the current crisis, which is emblematic of the state of our world. The exponential rise in the number of migrants is no doubt linked to the exacerbation of poverty in developing countries, which in turn can be attributed to failures of governance at the national and international levels, the perverse effects of climate change, demographic pressure and the scarcity of essential resources, as well as to the destabilization of certain countries by political crises that often lead to armed conflicts and to religious clashes fueled by the growth of violent extremism.

It is obvious that the scope of the problem represents a severe test to international provisions and poses a genuine challenge to the United Nations as the centre of global governance. The tragedies that have accompanied the massive flow of refugees and migrants besieging the borders of Europe endow the situation with a particular emotional charge. The Mediterranean has become a sea of sorrowful notoriety. Year after year, it has swallowed thousands of human lives whose dreams have been shattered by its waves. The lifeless bodies that wash up from time to time on its shores offer searing images that call out to our common humanity.

While it is true that we must combat those who shamelessly exploit the despair of their fellow human beings, we must be equally vigilant in improving normalized transportation along migratory routes, including the coastlines of the Mediterranean. The gravity of the situation calls for broad cooperation on the paths to be followed and the measures to be implemented. In that regard, the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul in May 2016 represents an exceptional opportunity. It will be important first and foremost to uphold the fundamental values of the civilized world: respect for human life, the duty to act in solidarity and respect for the fundamental rights of migrants, regardless of their status vis-à-vis the law and international conventions. This will require all necessary measures to be put in place to ensure the protection they deserve.

The motivations that propel people into exile from their homelands are multiple and often linked to circumstances severe enough to pry them from their native soil and lead them to embark on perilous routes towards destinations defined only by their hope

and their unwavering faith in a better future. Such is the case with today's Syrian refugees, who deserve the sympathy and solidarity of the transit and host countries.

The rising financial cost of hosting refugees and migrants calls for improved distribution and planning with regard to the burden such commitments entail. In that regard, Benin supports the proposal of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing in favour of multi-year programming of humanitarian assistance budgets. It is therefore urgent to reassess the funding sources for humanitarian assistance so as to ensure universal contributions in solidarity with migrants. Enhanced coordination among Member States and stakeholders would promote greater cohesion of policies covering support and international cooperation.

Terrorist attacks perpetrated by people with a relationship to the current or historical migratory flows from the Middle East to Europe raise the urgent need to exchange experiences and information on migrants in order to separate terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters from genuine migrants in search of security and asylum. The promotion of dialogue among religious faiths would be a vital contribution to reducing the intercommunity tensions linked to migration. Efforts already under way in that regard should be supported and encouraged. Similarly, marginal communities need to be supported in order to avoid the risk of radicalizing a narrow group of rootless youth whose accumulated frustration and lack of outlets for developing their potential make them easy prey for recruitment by extremists of all stripes. Experience has shown the capacity of such movements to cause great harm, which makes it all the more urgent for the world to come up with an appropriate response.

The hosting of migrants should be understood within a context of sustainable development, taking into account the long-term nature of the presence of refugees and migrants in host countries. The willingness of refugees and migrants to undergo social integration is a challenge that needs to be taken seriously. It is incumbent on the Governments and influential stakeholders of the nations concerned to work constantly to that end. In that regard, the example of Singapore is noteworthy in the context of today's discussion. Its rigorous management of a diverse population has yielded great benefits to that country, which profits from its various constitutive communities, making it a rainbow nation par excellence.

We must also work to strengthen international cooperation in order to facilitate mobility and address the difficulties arising from forced displacement around the world. The responsibility of States and international solidarity are two essential factors in ensuring the proper functioning of the international system of protection, resolving the increasing number of problems that arise globally with respect to population displacement, and easing tensions with respect to the management of international migratory flows and protection.

We must also redouble our efforts to bring peace to Syria and other countries affected by conflict. Encouraging prospects emerged from the recent negotiations in Vienna. Likewise, it is crucial to work tirelessly to improve living conditions in the relevant countries of origin, which have been affected by the growing scarcity of essential resources due to natural disasters and climate change. In that regard, the African countries most severely affected deserve increased assistance from the international community in order to be able to offer their young people hope for the future of their home countries so that they become stakeholders in and beneficiaries of the economic and social transformation promoted by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution A/70/1), instead of throwing themselves into the Mediterranean as food for sharks.

With respect to financing sources for humanitarian assistance, the international community must avoid the trap of treating resources for development assistance and emergency humanitarian assistance as if they were communicating vessels. The two different kinds of funding should remain distinct, because the depletion of development assistance could lead to an exponential rise in the need for emergency humanitarian assistance, which could lead in turn to an increase in situations of fragility and instability around the world.

Moreover, a global and balanced approach to migration is called for, taking into account the real opportunities for mutual enrichment and contributions to sustainable development entailed by the varied aspects of mobility, in order to prevent or at least reduce irregular and illegal flows. The issue of remittances from migrants in host countries is just as important to maximizing the contribution of migrants to sustainable development as the implementation of judicious partnerships between the diasporas and countries of origin. Such an approach would undeniably transform

migration into a win-win situation that would be of greatest benefit to our peoples.

Mr. Raja Zaib Shah (Malaysia): Allow me to extend our appreciation to the President for convening this timely debate.

In recent months, we have witnessed a sudden surge of migrants flooding into Europe across the perilous sea routes of the Mediterranean, with a record number reported to have reached European shores. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the elation of those who have made it to shore, thousands have fallen victim to the rickety, crowded, unsafe boats and perished in the Mediterranean. The sheer number of fatalities constitutes a humanitarian crisis in and of itself. The harrowing images of migrants, particularly those of a 3-year old Syrian boy, succumbing to the sea have been seared into our collective conscience.

In a horrendous exploitation of the misery of such migrants, unscrupulous human smugglers and traffickers seek to profit from them by charging exorbitant rates for passage across the Mediterranean. We condemn the atrocious nature of smugglers who feed off the vulnerabilities of those affected by armed conflicts, who are merely seeking a better life elsewhere. That situation cannot be allowed to continue.

In the face of this humanitarian tragedy, my delegation believes that the international community must take decisive action. We cannot afford to delay before responding to the alarming situation of unregulated migration around the world, particularly across the Mediterranean, which is now the world's most dangerous border crossing. In that context, my delegation welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 2240 (2015) on 9 October, which Malaysia co-sponsored. The resolution calls for action to stop human smugglers and traffickers within specific parameters that prioritize the preservation of life and the safety and security of migrants in accordance with applicable international standards.

My delegation also welcomes the readiness for cooperation between regional organizations, in particular between the European Union and the African Union. The adoption of the political declaration and action plan at last week's Summit in Valletta provided a solid framework for addressing the tragedy of unregulated migration on the Mediterranean. Malaysia shares similar views on the importance of addressing the root causes of irregular migration and

forced displacements resulting from State fragility and insecurity. We also laud the commitment of the leaders of the European Union and the African Union to expanding their efforts to prevent migrant smuggling, eliminate trafficking in persons and combat those who exploit vulnerable people.

In the light of today's debate and its focus on Syrian asylum-seekers, my delegation also wishes to stress that the challenge posed by the network of people-smugglers and human traffickers is not confined to the Mediterranean. Other regions, including my own, South-East Asia, are not immune to such challenges. We are therefore convinced that the takeaways from our deliberations today will ultimately help inform our policy responses in addressing irregular global migration.

Before concluding, I take this opportunity to inform members that my Government is currently taking steps to honour its commitment to taking in 3,000 Syrian refugees, as first announced by our Prime Minister during the general debate of the seventieth session (A/70/PV.22). Although not a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, Malaysia recognizes its responsibility as a member of the international community to extend assistance to the Syrian people in their time of need. We urge all countries in a position to do so to consider taking similar steps.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): In the light of the recent and ongoing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, we believe that it is important and timely for the international community to consider the situation at hand, address the plight and suffering of those seeking refuge, and, more importantly, assess the upsurge in the number of refugees worldwide and the specific refugee crises that arise periodically in different places.

Today, I would like to raise two points that I consider very relevant with respect to how the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, should approach and address the overall issue.

First, while trying to care for current refugees at the gates of Europe and elsewhere, the international community should bear in mind that this growing problem must be dealt with at its root. It is crucial to recognize that refugees and asylum-seekers are the symptom and not the problem, and to act accordingly. Today's refugees in the Mediterranean basin are fleeing

war, conflict and violence at home that are mainly the results of crimes and atrocities committed by terrorist and extremist groups. If we fail to deal effectively with those groups by eradicating them and discrediting the extreme ideologies on which they feed, there will be no let-up to the refugee crisis, which is steadily increasing.

The President took the Chair.

In that respect, we have learned from both recent and remote history. In terms of recent history, there is now near-consensus that foreign military intervention in several countries in the Middle East during the past decade played a large part in awakening the extremist monster that had already been nourished by takfiri ideologies for many decades, and created an ideal space for it to thrive in. Those who ignored and violated international law should therefore have realized by now that they are among those responsible for the critical situation we face today. In terms of remote history, the long suffering and misery of the Palestinian refugees speak volumes. As long as the crisis is not addressed and the Israeli occupation, its root cause, persists, this situation will continue to be another major source of instability in the region. The Israeli atrocities over recent decades, such as those committed in Gaza in 2014, have displaced as many people as the atrocities currently being perpetrated by Daesh.

Secondly, regardless of the causes of refugee crises, asylum-seekers are the victims of the failures by some Governments and their ill-conceived policies. They should therefore always be subject to international responsibility and protection. The international community must care about them, no matter who or where they are. The international community and the United Nations should do their utmost to help and support them with impartiality and on the basis of humanitarian principles. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case.

During recent years, many developing countries have hosted and supported millions of refugees with their own scarce resources — mostly unnoticed by the world. For its part, Iran has hosted millions of Afghan and Iraqi refugees for decades. We continue to host more than 1 million refugees in our country with minimal or no international support, attention or assistance. Most of the refugees living in Iran are victims of extremist groups in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Against that background, in the case of migrants in the Mediterranean basin, we have recently seen

a very high level of attention with regard to dealing with that problem. We have seen a good number of international meetings and events on the issue, and even the Security Council has considered this situation a threat to international peace and security and adopted a resolution on the matter under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. While we are happy to see the international community accord that level of attention to the problem, we believe that all refugees and refugee crises deserve the same attention and should be addressed by the international community on an equal footing. The international community and the United Nations should help all refugees, no matter who they are or where they are heading. We need to avoid double standards in humanitarian situations.

In this vein, the Islamic Republic of Iran remains steadfast in its determination to work with the international community to tackle the plight of refugees, in particular those who are primarily the victims of violent extremism at the present time.

The President: In accordance with resolution 49/2, of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Jilani (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important and timely meeting.

Today's debate highlights the world's serious concern about the unprecedented scale of the migration and refugee crisis, as well as the urgent need for a concerted global effort to address all aspects of the crisis. As many previous speakers have noted, we face increasing numbers of forcibly displaced people, due to new and ongoing emergencies, protracted refugee situations and the absence of political and durable solutions. Today, approximately 60 million people have been displaced by persecution, war or conflict — the largest number since the Second World War. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the interlinked crises in Syria and Iraq have uprooted over 15 million people, and around 2 million people were recently displaced in and from Yemen. The same shocking numbers and individual stories apply to the protracted refugee crises of Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Libya, among others.

For some time now, the humanitarian community has been warning that the scale of humanitarian operations is unsustainable and that the international humanitarian community, including United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and non-governmental organizations, cannot provide for the protection and basic life-saving assistance of the migrant and refugee populations as well as their host communities. This is a global challenge, requiring a global response and a long-term strategy that promotes our shared humanity and duty to protect migrants and enhance community resilience. We need a coordinated, comprehensive and humane response to the crisis on Europe's shores and borders, with an emphasis on safe passage for those in need of international protection.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris, some voices have tried to shift the discussion and place the burden on the refugees themselves. We must not forget that vulnerable migrants and refugees are fleeing from the same terror and trauma they have been facing on a daily basis, some for more than four or five years. Some are exploiting this tragedy to promote hate speech, xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia, which are fuelled and spread by ignorance. Such acts will cause further exclusion and violence, thereby increasing the vulnerability of refugees and migrants. However, we must also recognize the thousands of volunteers and ordinary citizens who are providing food, clothing, shelter and the comfort of their embrace across the whole of Europe and along the routes of migration. Those people deserve our support, encouragement and gratitude.

We are in full agreement with you, Sir, that saving lives, providing protection and upholding human dignity must be our number-one priority. We should not give in to those voices fuelling intolerance, xenophobia and hatred against refugees and asylum-seekers. We echo the reminder of the High Commissioner Guterres to the effect that

“States also have an obligation under international law to grant protection to refugees fleeing conflict and persecution.”

Furthermore, those countries hosting large number of refugees deserve our increased support and solidarity. The burden on them is immense not only in terms of the strain on services, resources and infrastructure, but with respect to the failure to provide them with sustainable and long-term support, which

poses a serious challenge to their security and stability and that of the whole region.

In that context, we are encouraged by the progress made on the discussion to support refugee host countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to improve the lives of both their own populations and the refugees they are hosting. Central to such progress must be the ability of those middle-income countries to access development funds, financial markets and financial instruments at both the bilateral and multilateral levels. In that regard, we welcome recent initiatives by the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank in relation to international financial institutions and the provision of concessional loans and grants to those host countries.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its 189 national societies are at the forefront of addressing the needs of displaced people all along the migratory route in countries of origin, transit and destination alike. In Syria, the brave volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent have risked life and limb to provide assistance and critical services to those caught up in the conflict. The Turkish Red Crescent has been providing support to 275,000 refugees since 2012, and the Croatian Red Cross leads the coordination of the Government and the international response in that country. The German Red Cross runs 375 accommodation centres, which together host 120,000 people. Throughout their journey, the IFRC assists migrants and refugees by providing food, shelter, clothes and blankets, as well as psycho-social support and assistance in restoring family links.

Finally, while the current crisis poses important challenges, let us remember that migrants and refugees have also made enormous positive contributions to the cultures, economies and vibrancy of societies around the world. The story of migration over time is very much the story of human history.

The President: In accordance with resolution 51/1, of 15 October 1996, I now call on the observer of the International Criminal Police Organization.

Ms. Neugebauer (International Criminal Police Organization): I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this timely meeting focused on decision-making and subsequent actions in relation to migrants and refugees. I would also like to thank you, Sir, for having given the floor to INTERPOL as the only global and neutral organization for police cooperation,

with our 190 member countries, which offers secured operational services and seeks the promotion of the highest standards of police work and cooperation among law-enforcement agencies.

The mission of INTERPOL is not only in line with the values of the United Nations, but also at the heart of its vision. We are convinced of our duty to protect and respect migrants and refugees — protect them from smuggling networks, who, as mentioned several times by previous speakers, blackmail them, exploit them and put their lives at great risk.

However, refugees can be protected and respected only if there is a clear distinction between people in need of protection and foreign terrorist fighters. How do we achieve that? INTERPOL's mission is to place itself at the service of member States. We exchange operational information about the *modi operandi* and resources used by criminals. That is done by gathering information on travel documents, but also information on foreign terrorist fighters.

Strong political encouragement to increase the use of INTERPOL's tools and services can make a difference today and in the future. By that I mean the systematic use of INTERPOL databases — in particular the stolen and lost travel document database and the database on foreign terrorist fighters — to effectively disrupt the mobility of foreign terrorist fighters across borders. But by that I also mean contributing to INTERPOL's foreign terrorist photo album to help identify known foreign terrorist fighters in every country of the world.

INTERPOL's global databases populated by member States offer crucial information to the international community via INTERPOL. By blocking the way for terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters, we grant protection and respect refugees and migrants. In view of that, the systematic use of INTERPOL's police capabilities is crucial. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) points to INTERPOL as the best global platform for information-sharing, a platform we now need to populate even more.

Let me conclude by quoting INTERPOL's Secretary General, Mr. Stock:

“Until now refusing to share information only meant taking a chance. Today it means voluntarily taking a major risk.”

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Through this debate and our informal meeting on the global crisis, we learned of the incredible hardships facing refugees, asylum-seekers and irregular migrants, particularly in the Mediterranean region. We learned also of the challenges facing many countries, as well as the legal and moral responsibilities that all must meet. It is reassuring that so many countries are united around the need to protect vulnerable people and to address the root causes of displacement. Fulfilling that commitment, however, requires more leadership, more action and more resources.

The Secretary-General has laid out a road map to enable us to address this crisis. The Vienna talks must succeed in ending the Syria conflict. Similar urgency is needed to end other conflicts around the world. A pledging conference for the Syrian humanitarian crisis will take place in London in February. A special “resettlement plus” conference will be convened by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in March, with a focus on the people displaced by the Syrian conflict and by violence in the region.

In the face of increasing threats from terrorists, all Member States must bring clear commitments to the table to demonstrate their unity and solidarity. In May, the World Humanitarian Summit will be an opportunity for the world to come together around a new deal for humanitarian action. It is important that the preparatory process for the Summit engage effectively with all Member States. I therefore look forward to the briefing from Under-Secretary-General O'Brien on 24 November. Following the Summit, I will convene a high-level thematic debate in July, where, among other things, Member States can discuss the Summit's outcomes in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1). Finally, the Secretary-General has announced his intention to hold a summit on managing large-scale movements of migrants and refugees in September. He is also hoping to submit a report to the General Assembly in advance of that summit. Over the coming period, I will engage further with members on how best to take all that forward.

With that, I would like to thank all representatives for their participation in this debate.

Several representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to

five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Mounzer (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is no wonder that we heard from the representative of an occupying Power (see A/70/PV.60) that is itself practicing the worst kind of terrorism, violence and murder against the Arab people in occupied Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. They have violated human rights to an appalling extent, in contravention of United Nations resolutions. They have killed members of that population. They have shown disrespect for the sanctity of holy sites. They have demolished the homes of Palestinians and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan. They have denied them their rights in accordance with international law.

I will not take long. I will not quote anyone. I will only shed light on the ugly face of the occupation.

I have personally witnessed 47 years of the ugly occupation of the Syrian Golan. I was born and raised, until the age of 16 years, in the currently occupied Syrian Golan, when I was separated from my friends, family and the population. The Golan had been divided in two parts: one part lay on the Syrian side and the other under the yoke of the occupation. Both parts are suffering from the worst types of oppression and violence — unprecedented in our history — at the hands of the ugly Israeli occupation. The latter prevents a mother living in the occupied Syrian Golan from seeing her children who reside on the other side of Syria. The occupation denies sons and daughters their basic right to participate in the burial of their parents. Children living in the occupied Golan have been deprived of communicating, meeting and reuniting with their families since 1967.

The representative of the occupation, who cried crocodile tears over the fate of Syrian children, failed to mention in his statement the Syrian children residing under the yoke of the occupation in the occupied Syrian Golan for the past several decades. Those children are also suffering daily from the crimes of the Israeli occupation and its violations of their basic rights to life, education, food and water. Moreover, those children are suffering from the consequences of the mines that the occupation placed in the occupied Syrian Golan. Those mines have resulted in the deaths of over 200 Syrian children and injuries — many of which lead to permanent disabilities — to over 300 more.

The Israeli occupying Power is fuelling the violence in Syria by supporting armed terrorist groups such as Jabhat Al-Nusra, facilitating their movement throughout the Golan and treating them in Israeli hospitals, as was referred to in the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (S/2014/401).

The statement of the representative of the occupation will not serve to erase Israel's black record and its continued violations of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, dating back to their adoption. It would be better for him to remain silent. If they would like to speak, it would be preferable for them to talk about their responsibility and their criminal record.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia): I express my delegation's regret and disappointment owing to the fact that during this debate, while participating delegations tried to contribute substantially to the subject matter, the Azerbaijani representative continued his unfortunate habit of using the General Assembly plenary for his country's anti-Armenian propaganda. Perhaps he has not been duly informed about the meeting, its subject and purpose, as Azerbaijan always finds a way to abuse the subject of the meeting with its single agenda item. While considering today's agenda item, they might wish to inform the Assembly about their elaborate financing of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)/Daesh, on which information is widely available from international sources.

Since I have taken the floor, let me inform the Assembly that Armenia has made huge strides to accommodate over 70,000 refugees from Syria and is making every effort to facilitate their full integration within Armenia.

Ms. Mammadova (Azerbaijan): My delegation takes the floor to exercise its right of reply to the comments made by the delegation of Armenia.

I would first categorically reject the allegations made against my country by the representative of Armenia. Azerbaijan's commitment to counter terrorism and to humanitarian principles is not the issue. Rather, it is Armenia's ongoing illegal resettlement policy of Syrian Armenians in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan that is presently the pertinent issue. The Government of Armenia has been actively promoting the resettlement of Syrian Armenians in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan since the very beginning of the conflict

in Syria. On a visit to Khankandi, former Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan said,

“We expect there can be a large influx of refugees from Aleppo. It is clear that we have to be ready for such developments so as to host Syrian Armenians.”

According to former Prime Minister Sargsyan, Syrian Armenians should be able to escape the blockade and go to Armenia, and the issue was being discussed with the so-called authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh region. Yet in May 2012, the representative of the separatist regime established by Armenia in the Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, Robert Matevosyan, said,

“Six families resettled in Kovsakan. We expected a greater influx, as the situation in Syria has aggravated.”

I note that Kovsakan is the Zangilan district of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

As reported in October 2012, Armenian families arriving from Syria settled in Berdzor, which is a Lachin district, and the so-called authorities of Berdzor expressed their readiness to host every Syrian Armenian wishing to resettle in the district. In numerous interviews, Syrian refugees have confirmed that the so-called authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh region provided them with land, houses and resources. As early as 2013, the number of Syrian refugees residing in the Lachin district of Azerbaijan alone stood at 857 individuals.

The resettlement policy is not exclusively confined to the Lachin district and the Syrian refugees. It is also being extended to Iraqi refugees. On 19 August 2014, the so-called authorities of the puppet separatist regime established by Armenia stated,

“The Armenian people cannot be indifferent to what is now being done to the Yazidi people. The Yazidis are the only people who have become an integral part of the Armenian people. The Nagorno Karabakh Republic is therefore willing to take in Yazidi refugees.”

Furthermore, as has been reported, Armenia recruits mercenaries from Syria for military operations. In his statement, Syrian refugee Artin Almagyan stated,

“Each and every Syrian Armenian has tremendous experience in military actions. I am sure I can guarantee that each of them is ready to come to

Armenia to share his knowledge and experience and apply such knowledge to the resolute defence of our lands against the enemy.”

The recruitment of mercenaries by Armenia has also been confirmed by Yana Mikaelyan, the so-called Chair of the Union of Veterans of the Nagorno Karabakh War, and Armenian civil-society representatives, including Mr. Vaan Martirosyan.

What Armenia calls Kovsakan is the Zangilan district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. And what Armenia calls Berdzor is the Lachin district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The occupation of the Azerbaijani district of Zangilan has been recognized and condemned in Security Council resolution 884 (1993). What Armenia defines as Artsakh is the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as confirmed in Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993). By expanding illegal settlements and illegal economic activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, Armenia seeks to boost the natural growth of the population and force demographic change. Those illegal acts constitute a grave breach of international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocols. As the occupying State, Armenia should be held responsible.

Armenia’s resettlement policies and related illegal acts adversely impact the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno Karabakh conflict. By encouraging resettlement policies, Armenia prevents Azerbaijani citizens from accessing their properties and possessions in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and denies them their right to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

The Security Council, via resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993) and 874 (1993), called upon the Government of Armenia to use its influence to secure the compliance of Armenians in the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic with a view to ensuring that the forces involved did not obtain the means to further expand their military campaign. In practice, and in violation of international law, Armenia continues to illegally occupy and control all occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, while exploiting the tragic situation of the Syrian refugees.

Mr. Samvelian (Armenia): To be brief, Azerbaijan understands better than anyone the question of mercenaries, since, as I mentioned in my first statement,

hundreds of Azerbaijanis are currently fighting in the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh.

Concerning the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, I regret that Azerbaijan has not only been misinformed about the subject of today's meeting, but also about the existence of a specific forum to address the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. That is the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, not the plenary of the General Assembly. I therefore strongly encourage the representative of Azerbaijan to save a little bit of the anti-Armenian propaganda she has disseminated here in the General Assembly and to address the issue in the appropriate forum.

Ms. Mammadova (Azerbaijan): Denial and inconsistency have become a common and predictable pattern of behaviour for the Armenian delegation. It denies the occupation, while its country's leadership takes pride in its personal involvement in the seizure of Azerbaijani lands. It claims that the puppet separatist regime established by Armenia in the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan is independent, when all key figures of the puppet regime illegally established by Armenia in the occupied Nagorno Karabakh region of Azerbaijan are in fact actors of the political system of Armenia, including the incumbent President of Armenia.

A self-proclaimed champion of human rights, Armenia speaks extensively about democracy, human rights and other values. In practice, however, Armenia is a State that has illegally occupied the territories of Azerbaijan for decades, used force to deny the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a State Member of the United Nations, carried out ethnic cleansing and forcibly displaced approximately 1 million

Azerbaijanis in order to establish a monoethnic society. Although it acknowledges the crimes it committed against Azerbaijan, in particular the Khojaly massacre, Armenia denies its responsibility and has enjoyed impunity for decades.

Illegal occupation and democracy are incompatible. The slaughter of civilians, ethnic cleansing and respect for human rights are incompatible. The use of desperate Syrian refugees for political and military gains is immoral.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 130.

Programme of work

The President: Before concluding, I should like to consult members regarding an extension of the work of the Second Committee.

Members will recall that, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2015, the General Assembly approved the General Committee recommendation that the Second Committee complete its work by Wednesday, 25 November. However, I have been informed by the Chair of the Second Committee that the Committee requests an extension of its work to Monday, 7 December, on the grounds that it would facilitate the reaching of consensus on pending draft resolutions.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to extend the work of the Second Committee until Monday, 7 December 2015?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.