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Summary record of the 667th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 30 September 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Arango Olmos.....(Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

High-level segment on solidarity and burden-sharing with countries hosting Syrian refugees (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Eliasson** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations), via video link from New York, said that it was vital not to dissociate questions of peace, security and development from each other, and to continue to work with regional institutions and bodies to lessen the burden on countries hosting Syrian refugees.
2. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) asked Mr. Eliasson about the situation regarding cooperation between the international financial organizations and the United Nations system.
3. **Mr. Eliasson** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations) said that cooperation between the World Bank and the United Nations had started 18 months previously. He hoped that the link between development and the provision of humanitarian aid, as envisaged by the founders of the United Nations, would be strengthened.
4. **Mr. Robelo Raffone** (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that on the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, CELAC wished to recall that humanity and solidarity were fundamental principles that should guide refugee policies. CELAC appealed for reconciliation and dialogue to reach a lasting peace.
5. **Mr. Comissário** (Mozambique), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the international community must extend multifaceted support to countries hosting Syrian refugees and that only a political settlement of the situation in the country could reverse the tide of refugees.
6. **Mr. Khabbaz Hamoui** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Syrian Arab Republic had always been a host country for all refugees, and acted generously towards them, without assistance from the international community, regardless of their origin or the reasons for their displacement. The Syrian Government had taken measures to encourage Syrian nationals to return to their country: temporary infrastructure had been set up to accommodate them; US\$ 150 million had recently been allocated to renovate schools, housing and hospitals in the war-torn regions; and preferential loans had been promised to former refugees. The Syrian Government found it regrettable that certain international organizations published exaggerated estimates of the number of refugees: in actual fact, people were registering as refugees with organizations even though they were only in transit in neighbouring countries or because they wished to qualify for assistance, particularly for resettlement in a third country. The Jordanian news agency, Petra, had recently stated that 91,000 Syrians had returned home.
7. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should adopt a clear action plan to warn refugees about the violence and danger to which their situation exposed them. Since voluntary return was the best solution to the problem of refugees, he regretted that in a recent report UNHCR had cautioned refugees against returning owing to various problems, mainly regarding security. More generally, the Syrian Government was concerned that, according to several reports, some countries were seeking to resettle certain categories of refugees in their territories, which posed a potential threat to the religious and social diversity of the Syrian Arab Republic. That also played into the hands of the Takfiri, who were trying to turn the Syrian Arab Republic into a Taliban republic where human rights were systematically violated.
8. UNHCR and countries hosting Syrian refugees should deal with the refugees humanely in accordance with international law and put an end to the sporadic media outcry.

Genuine efforts were needed by all concerned to resolve the humanitarian and political crisis. It was also important to halt foreign intervention, stop the import of weapons and mercenaries, promote a constructive political dialogue among all Syrians, and lift illegal unilateral sanctions imposed on the Syrian people.

9. **Mr. McNally** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that the participants in the high-level segment and UNHCR were not enemies of the Syrian people. The United Kingdom was contributing £162 million to the refugee response in the neighbouring countries and was one of the primary supporters of the UNHCR Regional Response Plan. Concerned at the situation of children in Syria, the British Government had launched the £30 million Lost Generation Initiative, which made the United Kingdom the second largest donor, after the United States of America.

10. **Mr. Schmit** (Luxembourg) said that Luxembourg and Australia, which were non-permanent members on the Security Council, had proposed that the Council should adopt a presidential statement on the need to facilitate the work of the humanitarian organizations, particularly in Syria. To date, Luxembourg had allocated \$7.8 million for humanitarian aid to people affected by the conflict and was willing to participate in efforts for the prompt resettlement of refugees, particularly the most vulnerable.

11. **Mr. Baloch** (Pakistan) said that the question of burden-sharing required new and innovative approaches, and that the issue should no longer be brought up intermittently but should rather form an integral part of UNHCR plans and policies.

12. **Mr. Molapo** (Lesotho) emphasized the unique needs of each refugee group and said that a new approach to burden-sharing had to be envisaged.

13. **Mr. Gómez Robledo** (Mexico) said that his country supported the draft final declaration of the Executive Committee on solidarity and burden-sharing with countries hosting Syrian refugees and would be making a substantial financial contribution, the terms and amount of which would be specified in the following days, with a view to lightening the burden.

14. **Ms. Chohan** (South Africa) said that her country made financial contributions to the activities of organizations that provided humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees: the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Turkish Red Crescent Society.

15. **Ms. Sipiläinen** (Finland) said that the Government of Finland had increased its annual refugee resettlement programme by 40 per cent and had accepted 500 Syrian refugees for resettlement. There were plans to donate US\$ 10 million in humanitarian aid, in addition to the more than US\$ 16 million that had already been allocated. Contributions of US\$ 40 million to regional development aid over the previous years had been channelled through multilateral organizations and financial institutions. Finland had decided to contribute US\$ 4 million to the Syria Recovery Trust Fund.

16. **Mr. Jespersen** (Denmark) said that, since the beginning of 2012, his country had provided more than US\$ 80 million in aid through a number of humanitarian NGOs and United Nations agencies working in Syria and neighbouring countries. In 2013, 20 per cent of Denmark's humanitarian budget had been earmarked for aid to the Syrian people. In the longer term, Denmark would take the lead in implementing a three-year Regional Development and Protection Programme to support refugees and affected hosting communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq within the framework of a partnership established with the European Commission, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, which was open to any interested countries.

17. **Mr. Raffone** (Nicaragua), on behalf of his country, commended the extensive efforts of Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Egypt, which had borne most of the burden

linked to the consequences of the humanitarian disasters in Syria. The Nicaraguan Government called on the Syrian Government to put an immediate end to violence.

18. **Ms. O'Brien** (Ireland) said that her country had allocated over 40 per cent of its annual resettlement places to Syrians displaced by the 2013 conflict and that applications by Syrians for protection status had received a very high recognition rate. Ireland had also provided almost €11 million to the relief effort, mobilized supplies of basic essentials and deployed volunteers to support the humanitarian operations of United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, on the ground.

19. **Mr. Fukushima** (Japan) said that his country had thus far contributed approximately US\$ 95 million in humanitarian assistance. To support the stabilization process in Jordan, Japan had also decided to provide approximately US\$ 120 million in loans. Japanese volunteers and NGOs were working on the ground to supply assistance to refugees. Assistance was also being administered in areas controlled by opposition forces, which were difficult for the international community to reach. With winter approaching, Japan had decided to provide US\$ 60 million in supplementary humanitarian assistance for Syria and the neighbouring countries.

20. **Mr. Borodavkin** (Russian Federation) said that his country had contributed tens of millions of dollars to humanitarian assistance through UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Hundreds of tons of basic necessities had also been sent on several occasions to provide assistance to Syrian refugees in Syria's neighbouring countries. The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and the neighbouring countries was largely a consequence of the unilateral economic sanctions imposed by certain countries and regional organizations. The Russian Federation called on States imposing sanctions to lift them immediately. It also hoped that an international conference on Syria would be convened in Geneva in November 2013 with the aim of fully implementing the provisions of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012.

21. **Mr. Alghunaim** (Observer for Kuwait) said that in January 2013 Kuwait had organized a pledging conference for Syria and had contributed US\$ 300 million to support the country through United Nations bodies and other international organizations. Kuwait hoped that, given the considerable scale of needs, the international community would increase its commitments.

22. **Mr. Chevallier** (France) said that his country supported Syrian solidarity networks, particularly the medical networks, and the Assistance Coordination Unit of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces. It also supported the few international actors on the ground. Since the start of the conflict, France had allocated €20 million for aid to Syrian refugees and Palestinian refugees from Syria. In the coming months, France would make an additional contribution of €20 million to Syria and its neighbouring countries, part of which would be urgently released in view of the approaching winter. France had also made a significant contribution to the European Union's aid budget. Lastly, since the beginning of the crisis, it had taken in around 3,000 Syrian nationals.

23. **Mr. Salem Al Zaabi** (Observer for the United Arab Emirates) said that his country had participated in all international aid efforts for the Syrian people, including the conference organized by Kuwait in January 2013, where it had announced a donation of US\$ 350 million. In addition, it had undertaken various humanitarian initiatives to support Lebanon and Turkey, and to provide assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. A field hospital had also been established in Jordan to treat the wounded from Syria and over 2,000 housing units had been built in that country to accommodate Syrian refugees. Moreover,

food aid had been distributed in Turkey. The United Arab Emirates was working to coordinate aid efforts in and outside of Syria, in response to declared needs.

24. **Mr. Choï** (Republic of Korea) said that it was time for the international community to address the long-term socioeconomic impact on host countries of taking in refugees by strengthening cooperation and coordination between humanitarian and development actors. Cooperation with host countries and their local communities should be reinforced in order to identify long-term vulnerabilities and support those countries in that regard. The Republic of Korea sincerely hoped that the Geneva 2 conference would be convened as soon as possible.

25. **Mr. Naziri Asi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country had substantial experience of hosting refugees and displaced persons which it was willing to share with UNHCR and concerned countries. Iran provided humanitarian assistance to civilians, especially in camps in Jordan and Lebanon. Such assistance was mainly medical, including hospital equipment, medicines and ambulances. Food and electric generators had also been provided.

26. **Mr. Hajnozi** (Austria) said that a large part of Austria's humanitarian aid to Syria had been channelled through UNHCR, to provide assistance both to Syrian refugees in the region and to internally displaced Syrians. During the previous 18 months, over 1,300 Syrians had obtained the status of protected person in Austria. Austria had also announced a humanitarian initiative to admit 500 Syrian refugees in a vulnerable situation or with close family ties to Austria.

27. **Mr. Delmi** (Algeria) said that the international community should promote a lasting solution to the Syrian crisis within the framework of mediation being led by Mr. Brahimi. Algeria had taken in thousands of Syrian refugees.

28. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that at the pledging conference held in Kuwait in January 2013, his country had pledged US\$ 2.5 million in humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria. India had provided that assistance in the form of drugs, food and other essential items.

29. **Ms. Ellis** (New Zealand) said that her Government had announced that it would contribute \$NZ 2 million to humanitarian agencies working in Syria and the neighbouring countries. That contribution was in addition to the \$NZ 5.5 million that New Zealand had committed to the Syrian crisis to date.

30. **Mr. Kalathiparambil** (Holy See) said that the host countries were overwhelmed by the influx of refugees and that the situation could spark tensions. He called upon the international community to intensify its efforts to provide support, in accordance with the principle of responsibility-sharing. He especially encouraged the richer countries to grant asylum to more refugees and enable a larger number of them to resettle in their countries, or at least provide temporary protection and guaranteed social welfare. To date, only 60,000 Syrian refugees had been admitted to Europe (excluding Turkey). In addition, adequate development funding should be allocated to guarantee the stability of the economy and strengthen infrastructure and public services in Syria's neighbouring countries.

31. **Mr. Vardakis** (Belgium) said that Belgium had recently launched a new appeal in the international media to urge the parties in conflict to respect their obligation to protect civilians, to authorize and facilitate immediate and unfettered access to humanitarian aid throughout the country and to ensure without delay the safety of humanitarian staff. In 2012, Belgium had allocated €2 million for humanitarian aid and €500,000 for the construction of schools in Turkish refugee camps. In 2013, it had made an additional contribution of €6.5 million, €1 million of which, channelled through UNHCR, had been allocated to Za'atri refugee camp in Jordan. In respect of hosting Syrian refugees in

Belgium, 895 persons had been granted residence rights in the first eight months of 2013, in contrast to 41 in 2011. The rate of recognition of refugee status was currently around 95 per cent.

32. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco), drawing attention to the scale of the Syrian exodus, said that, according to figures from UNHCR, approximately 5,000 refugees flowed every day into Syria's neighbouring countries. Funds allocated for humanitarian aid and protection for the victims of the Syrian crisis, however, covered only 47 per cent of needs. Given the complexity of that crisis, bilateral and multilateral organizations should be mobilized, and responsibility-sharing was of the utmost importance. Morocco had been the first country to send humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees. In 2012, a field hospital had been built in Za'atri camp. To date, 20,000 patients had been treated, i.e. 500 a day.

33. **Mr. Van Schreven** (Netherlands) said that, to date, the Netherlands had contributed €60 million to fund relief efforts in Syria and in the region and to lighten the burden of resettlement. In addition, the country granted refugee status to most Syrian nationals who applied for it and would continue to show solidarity towards countries that had opened their borders to the refugees.

34. **Mr. Luigi Serra** (Italy) drew attention to the alarming situation of Syrian children, a million of whom had been forced to flee to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. Due to its geographical situation, Italy was directly affected by the conflict and instability in the region. In 2013, 6,000 Syrian nationals had arrived on Italy's shores in unseaworthy boats. They were accommodated in a national identification centre where, following the identification procedure, they could submit a request for international protection. Over the past two years, Italy had contributed €20.7 million to support the Syrian people, through international organizations or in the framework of bilateral initiatives.

35. **Mr. Bessler** (Switzerland) said that, in accordance with the principle of responsibility-sharing, to which his country was firmly committed, SwF50 million had been contributed to finance various direct actions and support numerous partners. Regarding resettlement, the country planned to take in 500 refugees, whose status had been recognized by UNHCR. Preparations were under way for the arrival of the first group of refugees in the following weeks. In parallel, procedures for the granting of visas to relatives of Syrian citizens settled in Switzerland had been relaxed.

36. **Mr. Linklater** (Canada) said that his country had allocated \$203.5 million for humanitarian aid in Syria, as well as \$110 million for development assistance in the host countries. It had also contributed over \$47 million to fund security projects: \$20 million had been allocated to fight against biological and chemical weapons and \$4.4 million had been provided in non-military aid to the Syrian opposition. Canada had also provided bilateral aid to Syria's neighbouring countries. In June, it had pledged \$75 million to Jordan over a three-year period to enable it, in particular, to achieve its objectives in education, and \$25 million so that it could address security problems posed by the influx of Syrian refugees. Within its own territory, Canada had undertaken to continue to authorize residency for Syrian nationals whose visas had expired. He reaffirmed Canada's intention to authorize the urgent resettlement of 200 Syrians who were recognized by UNHCR and to accommodate 1,100 refugees as part of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. Lastly, Canada was committed to responding to urgent appeals for humanitarian aid and international protection, and to cooperating with organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

37. **Mr. Getahun** (Ethiopia) commended the generosity and hospitality shown by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in opening their borders to Syrian refugees. He also noted with satisfaction the unceasing efforts of UNHCR, the international community and donors to address the crisis. Ethiopia endorsed the statement delivered by Mozambique

on behalf of the African Group, as well as the draft final statement of the Executive Committee.

38. **Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) said that efforts made to mitigate the effects of the crisis should be founded on the principles of neutrality, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference. It was important not to politicize the situation and to ensure the non-militarization of humanitarian aid. China did not take sides. It would contribute \$2 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) and to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees and displaced persons. An amount of ¥15 million would also be contributed in order to support Syrian refugees in Jordan.

39. **Mr. Aldo Salone** (Brazil) said that since 2012 his country had cooperated with UNHCR to assist Syrian nationals who had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. In accordance with the principles of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing, countries which did not share borders with Syria also had a duty to improve access to their territories by Syrian refugees. For that reason Brazil had decided to facilitate the granting of visas to Syrian refugees, of whom there were increasing numbers in his country, as well as family reunification.

40. **Mr. Thongphakdi** (Thailand) commended the generosity of countries which had opened their borders to Syrian refugees. As a refugee-hosting country, Thailand adhered to the principle of responsibility-sharing. It was pleased to have participated in funding humanitarian interventions in Jordan and Turkey through its modest financial contributions over the previous year. It made regular financial contributions to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). It supported the draft final statement of the Executive Committee.

41. **Mr. Oktay** (Turkey) said that, in compliance with its open-door policy, Turkey had been hosting Syrian refugees for two and a half years. More than \$2 billion of public money had been spent on the influx of refugees, with scant help from the international community. Turkey currently had 21 camps in 10 provinces, which accommodated over 200,000 refugees. There were also 350,000 non-camp refugees. All refugees had been granted temporary protection status. By the end of the year, the total number of Syrian refugees in Turkey would have reached 1 million, according to UNHCR estimates. Health care was provided to refugees in field hospitals within camps, and in all public hospitals. To date, over 1.6 million refugees had received medical attention, 28,000 surgical operations had been performed and 300,000 refugees had been treated in field hospitals. Furthermore, 6,100 Syrian babies had been born in Turkey. There were also some 50,000 Syrian students in the camps and around 30,000 adult refugees had received vocational training in different areas. The Turkish State also addressed the needs of internally displaced Syrians through an operation conducted to that end in the border area. He was pleased with the effectiveness of the system to support Syrian refugees put in place by Turkey in the camps, but highlighted the fact that there was a larger number of refugees outside the camps.

42. **Mr. Humphrey Orjako** (Nigeria) said that women and children were the first victims of the Syrian conflict. He acknowledged the hospitality of Syria's neighbouring countries, which had opened their borders to Syrian refugees despite their own economic difficulties. He also commended the efforts of certain countries, such as Norway and Switzerland, which provided resettlement options for Syrian refugees in their territory.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.