



General Assembly

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Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sixty-fourth session

Summary record of the 674th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 4 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Arango Olmos (Colombia)

Contents

Election of officers

Adoption of the report of the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee

Closing of the session

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

Election of officers

1. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) nominated Mr. Choi Seokyoung (Republic of Korea) for the office of Chairperson.
2. **Ms. Golberg** (Canada) seconded the nomination.
3. *Mr. Choi Seokyoung (Republic of Korea) was elected Chairperson by acclamation.*
4. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) nominated Mr. Comissário (Mozambique) for the office of First Vice-Chairperson.
5. **Mr. Knutsson** (Sweden) seconded the nomination.
6. *Mr. Comissário (Mozambique) was elected First Vice-Chairperson by acclamation.*
7. **Mr. Fasel** (Switzerland) nominated Mr. Staur (Denmark) for the office of Second Vice-Chairperson.
8. **Mr. Thongphakdi** (Thailand) seconded the nomination.
9. *Mr. Staur (Denmark) was elected Second Vice-Chairperson by acclamation.*
10. **Mr. Cruz Toruño** (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of the Americas Group, nominated Mr. Reyes Castro (Mexico) for the office of Rapporteur.
11. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) seconded the nomination.
12. *Mr. Reyes Castro (Mexico) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

Adoption of the report of the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee

(document without a symbol, distributed in the meeting room)

13. **Mr. Boukili** (Rapporteur), introducing the draft report of the sixty-fourth session, said that sections I and II provided an overview of the session. Section III contained the conclusion on civil registration and the draft decisions that had been approved by the Executive Committee members, namely, the decisions on: the working methods of the Executive Committee and the Standing Committee; the 2014/15 budget; the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2014; observer participation; and the provisional agenda for the sixty-fifth session. The annexes in the draft report contained the statement of the Executive Committee on solidarity and burden-sharing with countries hosting Syrian refugees and the Chairperson's summary of the general debate. Once adopted, the report would be transmitted to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs Committee (the Third Committee) of the General Assembly as an addendum to the High Commissioner's annual report.
14. **Mr. Chabi** (Morocco) thanked all the parties that had been involved in drafting and agreeing the Conclusion on Civil Registration. The adoption of the Conclusion would make it possible to give UNHCR personnel targeted guidelines that would provide a clearer framework for their activities in the field.
15. *The report of the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee was adopted.*

Closing of the session

16. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) said that the constructive atmosphere that had prevailed during the general debate and the high-level segment had been very encouraging. The participants in the high-level segment had approached what was a divisive issue with a sense of shared purpose that had allowed for the unanimous adoption of a statement of

strong support for burden-sharing with the refugee hosting countries. That success had set an important precedent for the Executive Committee's response to future crises.

17. The adoption of the Conclusion on Civil Registration was another illustration of the spirit of unity within the Executive Committee. Although it might seem obvious that all persons should have the right to legal recognition of their existence, the process of drafting and agreeing the Conclusion had not been straightforward, because of differing interpretations, exacerbated by political divisions. Ultimately, those differences had all been overcome.

18. The multiplication of crises and the dramatic events in the Syrian region were placing UNCHR and the entire international humanitarian community under enormous stress. Sometimes it was difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. In that context, he recalled that Jean Monnet, a founding father of the European Union, had once said "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist; I am determined". The international community should adopt a similar attitude. It should be neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but determined in its efforts to protect, assist and minimize the suffering of those in need.

19. The statement delivered by the representative of the Danish Refugee Council on behalf of the NGO sector had delineated the particular areas on which that determination should be focused: providing an adequate response to crises in other parts of the world; providing protection for all those fleeing across borders; adhering to the principle of non-refoulement; and ensuring that all persons in need had access to international protection. The recent tragic shipwreck off the island of Lampedusa had provided a timely reminder of the importance of that determination.

20. It was a source of deep frustration that there were still no systems to enable persons in need to reach territories where they could receive protection without placing themselves at the mercy of traffickers or smugglers, exposing themselves to appalling human rights violations and risking their lives. He appealed to all States to search jointly for effective means to crack down on traffickers, smugglers and other criminal organizations, to protect victims and to afford everyone access to protection.

21. The representative of the Danish Refugee Council had also expressed a determination to eliminate statelessness. The international community should address that issue and also develop legal frameworks, policies and funding and coordination mechanisms to: support IDPs in urban, rural and camp settings; maintain the commitment to age-, gender- and diversity-sensitive programming; fight against arbitrary detention; provide more systematic support for local capacity-building; and fully apply the principles of partnership.

22. UNHCR had taken note of the comments during the general debate and the high-level segment on the need to: build a solid bridge between relief and development; increase solidarity and burden-sharing; strengthen partnerships; engage fully in the Transformative Agenda; and coordinate humanitarian action effectively. It was important to remember that coordination should add value to service delivery; it should not lead to increased bureaucracy, abuse of power or unnecessary hierarchies.

23. In relation to the need to preserve the integrity of the mandates of the High Commissioner and of the Office, he frequently had the impression that familiarity with the text of the 1951 Convention and with the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was limited. For example, many people apparently did not know that the High Commissioner and the Office of the High Commissioner had separate mandates. That misunderstanding illustrated a lack of awareness of some of the principles of international law. He was, in fact, directly accountable to the General Assembly and his responsibilities included the coordination of refugee responses. Primary responsibility for

refugee protection lay with States, while the Office of the High Commissioner had a supporting role.

24. The need for enhanced oversight was both a priority and a dilemma. Although its activities were growing, UNHCR needed to remain a slim-line organization and to maximize funding for external programmes, while minimizing the amount of funds absorbed by internal operations. UNHCR systematically reviewed its oversight mechanisms to identify any gaps and would attempt to fill them without using up resources that were desperately needed in the field.

25. *After the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairperson declared the sixty-fourth session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees closed.*

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.