



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 682nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 2 October 2014, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Staur (Vice-Chairperson)..... (Denmark)

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

### **Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee**

#### **(a) International protection (A/AC.96/1121, 1122, 1123, 1129 and 1131)**

1. **Mr. Türk** (Director of International Protection, UNHCR), introducing the international protection-related segment of the session, said that the role of humanitarian actors did not diminish the fundamental responsibility of each State towards everyone subject to its jurisdiction. Protection actors could reinforce community self-protection mechanisms, advocate for political solutions and galvanize global support, but they could not provide physical safety. Although host and donor countries had shown great generosity in the previous year, there had been an increase in the number of abductions of asylum seekers, instances of arbitrary detention and egregious cases of refoulement. Some States had ignored international standards by entering into bilateral agreements for the transfer of asylum seekers. UNHCR had continued to provide guidance, including through the courts, and had launched its Beyond Detention global strategy. The number of individual refugee status determination applications received by UNHCR had risen from 110,700 in 2012 to 194,600 in 2013. The situation was becoming increasingly untenable and Governments must assume greater responsibility for such applications.

2. Civilians were the primary targets in modern conflicts and children were among the most affected. Many children who sought asylum used the same clandestine channels as irregular migrants. Not all reached their destinations in safety, or at all. Ensuring access to education must be an integral part of the emergency response. In some countries, including Rwanda, Uganda, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, Jordan and Lebanon, refugee children were now allowed to attend local schools. Sexual and gender-based violence was a major risk faced by persons of concern. In that regard, the Safe from the Start initiative had contributed to improving protection responses from the outset of emergencies. Solar lanterns would in future be included among UNHCR core relief items and all staff would be given mandatory training on the subject.

3. The need to address the causes of displacement was now more urgent than ever. Conflict resolution was a key to prevention of displacement, but such human suffering had multiple causes. Agriculture and mining projects also led to displacement, especially of indigenous and vulnerable population groups. The trade in small arms, gold, diamonds and precious metals had tangible global repercussions. UNHCR played a role in prevention by promoting gender equality, the rule of law and human rights, and by investing in education and alternative livelihoods. The age, gender, diversity approach was designed to give displaced and stateless persons, especially women, a voice in decisions that affected them. Ending statelessness would remove one cause of displacement and UNHCR planned to launch a global campaign with that objective in November 2014. It was also working on specific local projects in various countries to address the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

4. The option of voluntary repatriation depended on the situation in the territories of origin. As an alternative, there had been numerous initiatives to promote local integration, including the decision by Pakistan to extend its proof of registration cards for Afghan refugees and efforts by the Islamic Republic of Iran to facilitate the employment of refugees. Resettlement was another important option. UNHCR was working hard to find additional solutions, for example through the Seeds for Solutions initiative.

5. Deterrence, while perhaps politically popular, was not the solution to the growing problem of irregular migration by sea. Making the public aware of the positive impact of migration, moving away from criminalization and working towards legalization would have a range of benefits, not the least of which would be saving lives. Unilateral action by States

did not work. Repelling people simply deflected the burden to other States. UNHCR applauded the Italian Government's Mare Nostrum initiative and the operations of Task Force Mediterranean. It also called for support for the Dialogue on Protection at Sea, which would take place in December 2014.

6. **Ms. Pollack** (United States of America) said that partnership with the affected communities and coordination were essential in order to keep protection at the forefront of humanitarian work. The United States and other donors were supporting an independent "whole of system" review of the subject with a view to strengthening the Global Protection Cluster. Even as the international community grappled with familiar but daunting problems, such as the need to protect IDPs and refugees from forced recruitment or abuse by armed groups, new challenges, such as the protection of civilians seeking safety on peacekeeping bases in South Sudan, continued to emerge. Various regions were facing the problem of migration of unaccompanied and separated minors. The United States was screening children on the border to identify their protection needs and funding regional programmes to help Central American countries to protect their own children. The United States would support the UNHCR campaign to end statelessness.

7. **Mr. Alexandris** (Greece) said that the scourge of human trafficking by sea in the Mediterranean must be addressed in the spirit of burden-sharing and solidarity. As a transit country with long land and sea borders, geographically situated at the outer limit of the European Union and in proximity to the main countries of origin, Greece faced particularly strong migratory pressures. The Greek coast guard had saved more than 6,000 lives to date in 2014. Greece applauded the Dialogue on Protection at Sea initiative. The Greek Government's successful national action plan on asylum and migration management, launched in 2010, had recently been supplemented by a revised plan, under which, after more than one year in operation, the Greek Asylum Service had recorded more than 11,000 applications for international protection. More than one fifth of the applications had been approved in the first instance as at September 2014. More than 20,000 Syrian nationals had entered Greece since January 2013, but only 629 of them had requested asylum.

8. **Mr. Gebru** (Ethiopia) said that the protection of refugees could be strengthened by improving humanitarian aid to the countries of origin. UNHCR should ensure that resettlement, sustainable repatriation and reintegration were used as tools of protection. States had the sovereign right to tackle irregular migration as they saw fit, but they should not deny refugees and asylum seekers access to asylum. The Government of Ethiopia was alarmed by the increase in human trafficking in the Horn of Africa region. It had adopted measures to protect the inhabitants of refugee camps and was committed to deepening its cooperation with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration with a view to sharing information and curtailing trafficking. The Government wished to know more about how UNHCR was implementing the Human Rights up Front initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and its implications for operations in host countries and countries of origin. It also wished to have more information on implementation of the UNHCR Guidelines on Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements and their impact on host countries.

9. **Ms. Nielsen** (Denmark) said that the steep increase in the number of asylum seekers and irregular migrants entering Europe had put a strain on asylum and reception systems in several European countries. A comprehensive response system was needed to identify those who were in need of protection and those who were not. Registration was critical, not only in order to safeguard national security and maintain public order, but also to identify the individual needs of refugees. Border control measures must allow for the restriction of movement where necessary. Destination and transit countries must cooperate with countries of origin in order to check human trafficking. The Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative (Khartoum Process) was designed to complement efforts to halt trafficking

between the Horn of Africa and Europe. Efforts to improve protection and living conditions for refugees in the countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic, including the regional development and protection programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, which was led by Denmark, required continued commitment.

10. **Ms. Westman-Clement** (Sweden) said that the Government of Sweden fully supported the commitment of UNHCR to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence as a key protection priority. Child protection was equally important. The European Union (EU) required a long-term sustainable common asylum system to ensure that the distribution of asylum seekers among member States was equitable. All EU member States must ensure that the relevant acquis was implemented consistently. Sweden welcomed the UNHCR Dialogue on Protection at Sea initiative and the Agency's policy shift away from long-term care to self-reliance and solutions-oriented planning with the relevant actors. Sweden currently chaired the Core Group on Resettlement and would like to see more countries offer resettlement in 2015. The focus on the crisis in Syria should not lead to the neglect of displaced persons elsewhere.

11. **Mr. Kaeser** (Switzerland) said that the failure of the Executive Committee to adopt a conclusion on international protection was regrettable. The Government of Switzerland welcomed the support of UNHCR and many member States for the Nansen Initiative, and called for implementation of the 10-point plan of action on Refugee Protection and Mixed Migration. In the matter of rescuing and intercepting vulnerable persons at sea, the quest for satisfactory solutions was proving difficult. Swiss experts were training officers and building institutional capacity in southern Mediterranean countries in order to ensure that border management was based on the principles of human rights and the protection of migrants. A uniform procedure for considering asylum requests had been put in place in Switzerland. With the exception of cases coming under the Dublin II Regulation, all applications were considered on their merits. Cases involving unaccompanied minors were given priority. Under new social integration programmes, refugees and persons with temporary leave to remain had access to information, advice, training and employment opportunities.

12. **Mr. Holter** (Norway) welcomed the establishment of the Solutions Steering Group and the Solutions Alliance. A strategic approach to resettlement should be explored. Norway had waived its traditional policy of resettling only refugees in protracted situations by adding 500 places to its 2014 quota for Syrian refugees. It would also chair the Working Group on Resettlement and the Annual Tripartite Consultations for 2014–2015. The Government of Norway was grateful for the life-saving efforts of Italy and EU agencies in the Mediterranean. Smuggling networks should be combated without ignoring the needs of victims. UNHCR should work with the EU in order to boost protection capacities in southern Mediterranean countries. The latest annual report of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre showed that 22 million people, mostly in Asia, had been forced to flee their homes because of natural disasters in 2013. That dimension of the displacement problem was not yet fully understood and had not been addressed in terms of protection or operational response. Norway appreciated the support of UNHCR and many member States for the Nansen Initiative.

13. **Mr. Morowa** (Sudan) said that his country had experienced great difficulties in combating the trafficking of Eritrean and Somali migrants through Sudan to the Sinai desert. The Sudanese Government had recently adopted legislation which provided for harsher sanctions for trafficking in persons and would continue to work actively with the African Union, UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration to combat such trafficking at the regional level. He hoped that the High Commissioner for Human Rights would be able to attend the Khartoum Conference in October 2014 which would consider regional protection issues.

14. **Mr. Shore** (Canada), noting with concern the continued use of refoulement in different regions, called upon all States to respect the principle of non-refoulement. His country welcomed UNHCR efforts to test new approaches and forge effective partnerships through such processes as the Transitional Solutions Initiative and the Solutions Alliance. However, more should be done to promote the strategic use of resettlement and expand national humanitarian admissions programmes. The adoption of a conclusion on voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration would have galvanized efforts to protect and assist those affected by migration crises.

15. The increase in the number of unaccompanied and separated children and the sustained risk of sexual and gender-based violence remained matters of concern, to be addressed through field-level refinement and implementation of the UNHCR 2012–2016 Education Strategy and Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy. He stressed the importance of refugee registration as the basis for effective protection interventions and called on UNHCR to strengthen the functional linkages between registration and protection activities.

16. **Mr. Reynes** (France) expressed concern at the growing number of conflicts involving armed groups and called on the international community to place civilian protection at the heart of any peacekeeping operations. Welcoming UNHCR efforts to provide special protection to women and children through an age, gender and diversity approach, he called for action to combat human trafficking to be made a priority under the Agency's protection programmes, including through closer cooperation with the International Organization for Migration on the issue of mixed migration and trafficking. Similarly, the registration of refugees should form a crucial part of protection efforts and States should be encouraged to ensure that all persons fleeing conflict had access to health care and education.

17. With regard to internally displaced persons, he stressed that States bore primary responsibility for the protection of their own citizens. The establishment of durable protection solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons would require a firm commitment from all stakeholders, including in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the context of the Solutions Alliance.

18. **Mr. Habchi** (Algeria) said that mixed migratory flows from the Middle East and North African Region posed a complex protection challenge for the international community. Algeria had experienced a significant influx of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, including a growing number of economic migrants. The children of Syrian nationals present in Algeria were granted access to basic services, including education, through a simplified declaration procedure, and such access was also made available to sub-Saharan refugees in the towns. Stressing the importance of action on behalf of vulnerable groups, particularly children, and of ensuring the provision of food rations for refugees in Africa, he said that his country remained committed to providing assistance to Sahrawi refugees, pending their voluntary return pursuant to the United Nations Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara. He called on UNHCR to speed up completion of the study on the refugee burden borne by host countries.

19. **Mr. Boukili** (Morocco) expressed concern at the decrease in the number of voluntary repatriations and called for greater international assistance to enable refugees to return to their homes where appropriate. He welcomed the international community's focus on establishing durable solutions to protection challenges and promoting local integration, and called on UNHCR to allocate a greater proportion of its budget to those efforts. Despite current constraints on capacity owing to the growing number of emergency situations worldwide, UNHCR should not be distracted from protracted crises, particularly those involving refugee camps in Africa, and must ensure that refugee registration requirements were respected pursuant to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In that

context, he drew attention to the absence of registration arrangements in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf.

20. **Mr. Habchi** (Algeria) said that the registration of Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps would be carried out within the framework of the United Nations Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara. The United Nations Secretary-General's report of April 2014 on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2014/258) had described the conditions in the Tindouf camps and had noted that children between 6 and 14 years of age had access to primary and secondary education.

21. **Mr. Chemaly** (Danish Refugee Council), speaking on behalf of a number of non-governmental organizations, said that UNHCR and its humanitarian and development partners must strengthen their coordination efforts to provide effective protection in the field and expressed regret at the lack of an Executive Committee conclusion on international protection. He also expressed concern at the failure to appoint an Assistant High Commissioner for International Protection. In regard to the Syrian conflict, he stressed the importance of establishing a comprehensive action plan, including temporary protection and expanded resettlement programmes. Additional land and improved livelihood programmes for refugees in Kenya should also be introduced as quickly as possible and all refugee returns to Somalia from Kenya should be voluntary and in full compliance with international law. Lastly, he urged the Australian Government to strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries to improve protection standards for asylum seekers and expressed concern at the dramatic increase in unaccompanied children from Central America who had been forcibly displaced.

22. **Mr. Türk** (Director of International Protection, UNHCR), responding to the commends made, said that the current international protection system continued to respond effectively to situations of mass displacement and would remain an essential part of UNHCR working methods. He welcomed the establishment of additional national protection systems and agreed that reception and integration measures should be strengthened. Increased efforts must also be made to combat xenophobia and racial discrimination, which had a negative impact on the implementation of the international protection system.

23. He took note of concerns regarding transit countries for refugees and stressed the importance of registration systems and solidarity measures for host countries. Resettlement arrangements also played a key role, particularly in relation to the Syrian conflict. In respect of protection at sea, the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in December 2014 would provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the practical measures that could be taken to support and assist those countries most affected by the issue. He looked forward to the Khartoum Conference in October 2014, which would consider the secondary movements, particularly of children, from the Horn of Africa, East Africa and Egypt to Europe, and hoped that it would result in a regional action plan encompassing existing activities at national level. The United Arab Emirates had organized a conference on protection measures for unaccompanied and separated children in the Middle East, the results of which would inform future UNHCR activities on that issue.

24. Expressing support for the Nansen Initiative, he said that UNHCR had joined with a number of partners and United Nations agencies to address climate change and planned relocation. In its lead role in the Global Protection Cluster, UNHCR had endeavoured to ensure that protection remained a focus in humanitarian settings and had disseminated the relevant materials to UNHCR staff in the field. New temporary protection guidelines had been published and would shortly be made available to member States.

25. The UNHCR monitoring report of 2013 contained information regarding the Agency's progress in addressing child protection, education and sexual and gender-based

violence. It revealed that a more integrated overall protection response was required to establish better linkages between the three areas, particularly in respect of data collection and programming.

**(b) Programme budgets, management, financial control and administrative oversight** (A/AC.96/1135 and Add.1 and A/69/5/Add.6)

26. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the High Commissioner's note on the accounts for the year 2013, as contained in the Report of the Board of Auditors to the General Assembly on the accounts of the voluntary funds administered by UNHCR for the period ended December 2013 (A/AC.96/1135), and the report of the Board of Auditors (A/69/5/Add.6) had confirmed the mobilization of resources to combat the Syrian emergency but had highlighted two key areas for improvement, namely the management of inventories and the recognition of property, plant and equipment. Steps had therefore been taken to improve the management of inventories and discontinue application of the transitional provision concerning the recognition of property, plant and equipment.

27. **Ms. Matsuura-Muller** (Controller) said that the 2013 financial statements had been prepared in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and included the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2013, the statement of financial performance, the statement of changes in net assets, the statement of cash flow and the statement of comparison of budget and actual amounts. There had been two significant changes to the financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2012: the financial statements now contained comparative information for two periods, i.e. 2012 and 2013, and disclosed all property, plant and equipment in service. For the year ending 31 December 2013, total assets had increased to US\$ 2.2 billion and total liabilities had increased to US\$ 697 million. Total fund balances and reserves had stood at US\$ 1,528.8 million, representing an increase of 48 per cent compared to 2012. Total revenue in 2013 had amounted to US\$ 3,164.6 million, an increase of around 30 per cent compared to 2012, and had primarily resulted from contributions towards the Syrian emergency. Total expenses for the financial period had amounted to US\$ 2,704.2 million, of which some 40 per cent had been incurred through implementing partners. In regard to the report of the Board of Auditors on the 2013 financial statements, she was pleased to announce that the Board had issued an unqualified audit opinion, meaning that the financial statements fairly presented the financial position of the voluntary funds administered by UNHCR and the financial performance and cash flows for 2013. In its report, the Board of Auditors had issued 18 recommendations related to the provision of health services, the Syrian Arab Republic situation, the management of implementing partners, the management of inventory and financial matters. UNHCR had accepted all the recommendations and had already initiated measures to address them, as described in document A/AC.96/1135/Add.1.

28. **Mr. Ter Kuile** (Netherlands) noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had given effect to many of the recommendations made by the Board of Auditors. In particular, UNHCR had improved its inventory management; developed a risk-based approach to managing its partners; taken additional anti-fraud measures; and set up a web portal to share relevant information on partners.

29. **Ms. Andersen** (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Denmark, Finland and Sweden, said that UNHCR was to be congratulated on having submitted its second financial report in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and on having received an unqualified audit opinion from the Board of Auditors for the year 2013. It should continue its efforts to give effect to the outstanding audit recommendations from 2012 and previous years.

30. Sweden and Norway continued to be the two largest contributors of non-earmarked funding to UNHCR and attached great importance to ensuring that it benefited from robust financial management and internal control systems. Sufficient resources should be allocated to oversight functions both at headquarters and in the field. Priority should be given to finalizing and implementing the new framework governing the Agency's relations with its partners; accelerating the implementation of its new enterprise risk management framework; providing improved documentation and training on risks and on how to prevent them; and strengthening anti-fraud measures throughout UNHCR in the light of the report of the Board of Auditors, according to which there was a general lack of awareness of external fraud risk in UNHCR and the Inspector General's Office was not equipped to tackle fraud in a proactive, timely and comprehensive manner. In that connection, UNHCR should build the capacity of the Inspector General's Office to investigate and follow up on cases of fraud committed by staff, external partners or suppliers.

31. **Ms. Pollack** (United States) said that the fact that the UNHCR budget had increased by almost US\$ 1 billion in 2014 had raised expectations in terms of oversight. While UNHCR had made significant progress in increasing transparency and accountability in recent years, much remained to be done in that area.

32. She noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had received an unqualified audit opinion for the year 2013 and that it was continuing to give effect to the recommendations made by the Board of Auditors. Action was needed to strengthen oversight and accountability in large-scale emergencies. Staff should receive additional training to ensure that they were equipped to deal with such emergencies. Oversight and accountability mechanisms should be systematically incorporated into the planning processes for emergency situations to guarantee their effectiveness when resource-intensive operations were being carried out.

33. The Agency should also take a more proactive approach to preventing and mitigating fraud; raise staff awareness of the need to report fraudulent activities; and continue to plan its operations on the basis of targets, standards and indicators that were objective and measurable.

34. **Ms. Buchan** (Canada) said that Canada welcomed the new agreement between UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs aimed at improving coordination in situations where assistance was being provided to both refugees and internally displaced persons. In a survey conducted in 2014, 76 per cent of NGO and UNHCR respondents had reported good to excellent partner relations. However, given that record high funding in the amount of US\$ 1.15 billion had been allocated through partners in 2013, UNHCR should continue to enhance the framework governing its relations with such partners and roll that framework out at field level. Partners should be selected by means of a transparent process and informed of any changes affecting them in a timely fashion. Canada had donated to the Light Years Ahead initiative, which was aimed at introducing innovative technology such as solar street lights, lanterns and fuel-efficient stoves in refugee camps in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Canada encouraged UNHCR to continue using innovative technology in its operations. Furthermore, the improvements made to the Global Report showed that UNHCR was moving towards results-based reporting. However, there was still a need for a deeper analysis of the data available on the Global Strategic Priorities and for increased reporting on the limitations and challenges encountered at the global and country levels.

35. **Ms. Velasco Ludlow** (Mexico) said that UNHCR was to be commended on having submitted its second financial report in accordance with the IPSAS. The Agency should keep States informed of the progress made in adopting a risk-based approach to managing its partners. Mexico underscored the need for a robust auditing function to strengthen the internal control systems of UNHCR.



36. **Ms. Kumakura** (Japan) said that Japan welcomed the organizational reforms undertaken by UNHCR and hoped that it would continue to give effect to the recommendations made by the Board of Auditors with a view to increasing the efficiency of its operations. UNHCR should also take measures to improve the way in which it monitored and managed its implementing partners.

37. **Ms. Matsuura-Mueller** (Controller) said that UNHCR had begun to provide staff in the field with training on the fundamentals of financial management, which covered auditing, fraud prevention and inventory and assets management. That training had enabled staff to address shortcomings and prevent fraud in field operations. Moreover, the High Commissioner had approved the appointment of 20 additional project control officers to oversee the work of implementing partners. In the knowledge that it was not enough simply to investigate and punish cases of corruption or fraud after the event, over the past few years UNHCR had taken a number of measures to prevent corruption and fraudulent activities from occurring. The Agency was one of the few employers in the United Nations system that required new staff to confirm in writing that they had read and understood its Code of Conduct. Workshops had been held on such topics as ethics in procurement and financial disclosure. A range of handbooks and manuals offered guidance on how to prevent fraud in a variety of settings. A new policy on the prevention of fraud and corruption had been issued in July 2013. That policy required all field offices and division directors to conduct a fraud risk assessment. There was still a need to improve the coordination of measures aimed at preventing corruption and fraud.

38. The Agency had started to develop a risk-based approach to managing its partners in 2012. At that time, reference had been made to the fact that the process could take up to three years to complete. The approach would cover topics such as the selection of implementing partners, the provisions of partnership agreements, monitoring and coordinating projects and risk-based audits. A new policy on selecting implementing partners had already been issued and selection committees had been set up accordingly. Only in exceptional circumstances could the established selection process be bypassed. Furthermore, a new policy on project monitoring had been drafted and was currently being piloted. The Agency had also completed its preparatory work on risk-based audits. The audits would focus mainly on high-risk projects. In addition, a web portal providing detailed information on the Agency's implementing partners had been created. The web portal also allowed partners to consult and verify their compliance with all relevant UNHCR policies. Moreover, the Supply Management Service had recently issued instructions on managing stock levels and making replenishment decisions.

39. **Mr. Aleinikoff** (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that more staff filed financial disclosure statements in UNHCR than in any other body in the United Nations system. The report of the Internal Audit and Oversight Committee provided additional information on the new enterprise risk management framework. Furthermore, additional auditors would be appointed to the Internal Audit and Oversight Committee and to the Inspector General's Office in 2015. The Agency would continue to use innovative technology in its operations.

40. **Mr. Tapio** (Office of Internal Oversight Services) said that field audits systematically covered issues such as the monitoring and management of implementing partners. The revised memorandum of understanding concluded with UNHCR would serve to strengthen the internal audit services provided to the Agency. Moreover, three new auditor posts had been created in Amman, Jordan and the recruitment process was under way. Representatives of the Office of Internal Oversight Services had met with representatives of the Inspector General's Office and the Board of Auditors to engage in a forward-planning exercise.

**Consideration of reports relating to programme and administrative oversight and evaluation***Report on activities of the Inspector General's Office (A/AC.96/1138)*

41. **Mr. Kebede** (Inspector General of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), introducing the report on activities of the Inspector General's Office (A/AC.96/1138), said that the process of in-housing the internal audit function had been put on hold pending action to resolve the legal issues that had arisen. Various solutions had been proposed and were being reviewed. Despite that turn of events, the Agency's current internal audit arrangement with the Office of Internal Oversight Services was still in place and the Office of Internal Oversight Services continued to work with the Inspector General's Office to ensure a complementary and effective oversight function.

42. In view of the possible integration of inspection and internal audit units, the Inspector General's Office had taken steps to strengthen its inspection service by including relevant aspects of audit standards and methodology in its inspection methodology. Moreover, the job description of two professional posts had been revised to include an auditing component. The inclusion of that component would serve to strengthen the inspection function and to provide the Investigation Service with forensic audit capacity.

43. A recent mission to review the measures in place to minimize risks to UNHCR operations in the Syrian Arab Republic had shown that the risk of misunderstandings between local communities and humanitarian workers was compounded by rapidly evolving developments on the ground and had a direct impact on the safety and security of staff. There was therefore a pressing need to strengthen monitoring and analysis capacity in the region to enable early warning signals to be sent to managers and additional resources to be obtained to ensure the safety and security of staff. The Management Implication Report on the mission would identify critical shortcomings and provide recommendations for remedying them. Management implication reports were an important aspect of the Agency's enterprise risk management policy, as they highlighted systemic weaknesses and policy gaps that could affect UNHCR operations. The level of compliance with the recommendations contained in those reports was consistently high.

44. The European Anti-Fraud Office had made 12 recommendations to the Inspector General's Office following the independent review of the Agency's investigation function. The steps taken by the Inspector General's Office to give effect to those recommendation included building the capacity of the Investigation Service; redeploying a number of posts for increased proximity to field operations; and carrying out more proactive investigations based on the analysis of trends of misconduct, and external investigations in respect of implementing partners.

45. Six of the 12 new posts requested by the Inspector General's Office for 2015 had been approved. However, in spite of the increase in the overall UNHCR budget, the financial resources allocated to the Inspector General's Office remained inadequate. More posts would need to be created to enable the Inspector General's Office to carry out its mandated activities in a timely and professional manner. Four of the newly created posts would constitute the Oversight Unit in Nairobi, Kenya, while the other two would increase the capacity of the Inspector General's Office at headquarters. The creation of a senior strategic and operational intelligence analyst position was an important development, as it would provide the Inspector General's Office with the capacity to warn UNHCR of potential threats and support senior decision makers in dealing with emerging crises.

46. The Inspector General's Office had continued work on the project entitled "Strengthening UNHCR-NGO Cooperation on Third Party Investigation", the aim of which was to develop a framework for close cooperation with NGO partners and build their

investigation capacity. Moreover, two investigation workshops for national NGOs had taken place in Pakistan and Kenya. A third workshop was to take place in Jordan in November 2014. Furthermore, funding had been secured for the joint UNHCR and Danish Refugee Council project to establish and maintain a roster of experienced investigation consultants who could carry out investigations on behalf of the Agency's NGO partners. A press release announcing the project had been issued and several posts had already been advertised.

47. **Mr. Bonanno** (Denmark), speaking also on behalf of Finland, Norway and Sweden, said that the Nordic countries attached great importance to strengthening the Agency's audit and oversight functions. The legal issues that had caused the process of in-housing the internal audit function to be put on hold should not prevent the necessary measures from being taken to strengthen that function. The Nordic countries therefore welcomed the revised memorandum of understanding concluded to that end between UNHCR and the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The Agency should continue its efforts to improve coordination and synergies among the various audit and oversight functions and between the Office of Internal Oversight and the Inspector General's Office in particular. The Nordic countries also welcomed the more systematic approach that the Agency was taking in order to give effect to the recommendations made by the various oversight bodies through the Internal Compliance and Accountability Committee; and they noted with satisfaction that the budget of the Inspector General's Office was to be increased and that it would receive six additional staff members in 2015. The Nordic countries urged UNHCR to address the lack of systematic reporting on inspection missions conducted by the Inspector General's Office.

48. **Mr. Kebede** (Inspector General of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the current memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Office of Internal Oversight Services would be revised only if it was decided that UNHCR should go ahead with the in-housing of its internal audit function.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*