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Sixty-second session

Summary record of the 652nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 5 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Badr.....(Egypt)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Getahun** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia had been hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking protection and assistance since the 1980s and that it currently hosted more than 265,000 refugees from Somalia, Eritrea, the Sudan and South Sudan. The unprecedented drought and the armed conflict in Somalia had forced hundreds of thousands of Somalis to flee to Ethiopia and other neighbouring countries in the past nine months. To accommodate the new influx, two new camps had been opened in Ethiopia in 2011 in the space of two months. The Government was working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) and the relevant humanitarian agencies to contain the situation. The High Commissioner's visit to the Dollo Ado refugee camps had had an impact on saving lives by bringing the plight of the refugees to the attention of the international community.

2. Refugee inflows from Somalia into Ethiopia had slowed since the commencement of humanitarian assistance operations inside Somalia. However, Ethiopia was still receiving upwards of 300 asylum-seekers a day from southern Somalia. The international community must therefore continue to provide support in the region. The Government of Ethiopia had decided to extend its cooperation arrangements to include operations in areas bordering Somalia. Due to unrest in the Blue Nile State, large numbers of asylum-seekers had been arriving in western Ethiopia since September. There were now close to 25,000 asylum-seekers along the borders of Ethiopia and the Sudan. About 4,000 refugees had been relocated to the camp in the State of Benishangul Gumuz in Ethiopia. The Government of Ethiopia was working with UNHCR to assist new arrivals and expected the donor community to respond quickly with support.

3. On average, 1,200 Eritrean asylum-seekers crossed the border into Ethiopia every month. Improvements were needed to the services offered to them in various camps. The establishment of vocational training centres and development of income-generating activities were among the actions that needed to be taken. The Government of Ethiopia had instituted a scheme to allow Eritrean refugees to live in whatever part of the country they wanted. Ethiopia remained committed to maintaining its open-door policy on refugees, even if refugee camps had had a major impact on the environment over the past two decades. He appealed to UNHCR and donors to take urgent action to undertake environmental remediation in the affected areas.

4. **Mr. Correia** (Observer for Angola) said that his Government was deeply concerned about the drought in the Horn of Africa and supported the international community's efforts to provide humanitarian aid and find political solutions to the armed conflict in Somalia. The Government of Angola viewed the return of Angolan refugees as a matter of the utmost importance and hence it had established a repatriation programme for those refugees. Notwithstanding the financial constraints that had delayed the implementation of programmes developed with host countries and UNHCR, the Government would spare no effort to complete the repatriation programme in 2011. The seven reception centres that the Government had established were fully equipped to continue to receive returnees.

5. **Ms. Bhattacharya** (India) expressed concern about the shrinking of humanitarian space, notably in Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Somalia. India remained committed to cooperating with UNHCR in order to strengthen the organization's protection capacities. States needed to recognize that voluntary return remained the best option for refugees and that they had a responsibility, through bilateral and regional cooperation, to ensure the safe return of refugees to their countries of origin. Care should be taken to keep asylum issues and migration issues, including causal factors such as climate change, quite separate. She welcomed the progress that UNHCR had made on improved accountability and financial

and programme controls and would be glad to receive more details on the plans for the establishment of an independent audit and oversight committee, including the terms of reference of such a body. While she appreciated the work done by UNHCR implementing partners, she wished to urge the organization to focus on international protection of refugees so as to avoid any dilution of its efforts.

6. **Mr. Krkobabic** (Serbia) said that, as a result of efforts by UNHCR and the initiative of Serbia, a regional process to resolve refugee issues and protracted refugee situations had been set in train. Since a regional ministerial conference held in early 2010, significant progress had been achieved jointly by Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Another ministerial conference was due to be held on 7 November 2011 in Belgrade in order to allow the participating countries to reaffirm their commitment to cooperation. The event would be followed by a donors' conference at the beginning of 2012. The participating countries hoped that the international community would demonstrate its generosity at that conference; its support was crucial for the implementation of the regional agreements that had been reached.

7. In Serbia, the implementation of the regional project should result in housing being provided for 16,780 families and 45,000 individuals. However, owing to a lack of funding, only the needs of the most vulnerable refugees would be met under the project. Moreover, more than 210,000 internally displaced persons in Kosovo and Metohija were not included in the project, even though they still had no access to their property and their rights. That was why the assistance that UNHCR provided to the population in the place of origin and the place of displacement remained important in allowing the displaced to determine their future. Despite the difficult economic situation that it was facing, Serbia continued to provide assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons and remained committed to pursuing cooperation with the international community and countries in the region in order to achieve durable solutions for refugees.

8. **Mr. Condé** (Guinea) said that, for the first time in their history, the people of Guinea had recently elected their president in free, democratic and transparent elections. The Government of Guinea continued to uphold the ideals and principles that informed humanitarian work. Guinea had hosted hundreds of thousands of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees for more than 20 years and had also received refugees from Côte d'Ivoire. The protracted mass refugee situation in Guinea had adversely affected many national socio-economic development programmes and projects and continued to exact a very high price from host communities in terms of the environmental and health-related damage that it caused. On the ground the State's commitment to dealing with that humanitarian situation was evidenced in: efforts to bring about the voluntary repatriation of the refugees; the implementation of a local integration programme focusing on the socio-economic integration of refugees and host community development; the establishment of a national institution to deal with local integration and follow-up on refugee issues; the drafting of a bill on protection and asylum; the ratification of the Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa; and the signing of a tripartite agreement between Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and UNHCR on the voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees living in Guinea. Guinea called on UNHCR and donors to provide it with additional financial and material support to help it achieve those objectives.

9. **Mr. Gutiérrez** (Mexico) said that the international dialogue on the protection of persons displaced as a result of natural catastrophes should be pursued with all humanitarian organizations in order to develop effective global responses and cooperation programmes that would prevent duplication of effort. Joint action with other United Nations bodies was also needed in order to enhance and ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. In that regard, he was pleased to note that UNHCR had, among other things, set up a section to monitor the safety of UNHCR personnel deployed in sensitive zones.

10. International cooperation and responsibility-sharing were vital to alleviating the burden on refugee host countries and to finding long-term solutions. To the extent that their capacities allowed, countries must establish programmes to facilitate the settlement and social integration of refugees. Mexico had enacted a law on refugees and subsidiary protection under which it was possible, in certain circumstances, to host foreign nationals who had been recognized as refugees in a third country. Lastly, Mexico reiterated its call for the elimination of statelessness, a problem for hundreds of thousands of people across the globe, and commended UNHCR on its efforts to raise awareness of the problem.

11. **Mr. Petrov** (Bulgaria) said that his country was fully committed to the development of a common European asylum system, a component of which was resettlement. In 2011, Bulgaria had adopted a national strategy for 2011–2020 on migration, asylum and integration that included a national resettlement programme. In the same year, the State Agency for Refugees had taken steps to: grant protection to foreign nationals in Bulgaria in accordance with the law on asylum and refugees; enhance the existing infrastructure for receiving asylum-seekers and providing them with shelter; implement measures to help refugees adapt to and integrate into Bulgarian society; continue working with European institutions, UNHCR and other governmental and non-governmental organizations on asylum and refugee issues. An immediate goal set by the State Agency for Refugees was to develop a national programme on refugee integration. Finding durable solutions for the most vulnerable refugees (unaccompanied minors, young mothers and victims of trafficking) was high on the agenda for cooperation between the Government of Bulgaria and NGOs. The State Agency for Refugees had a temporary protection plan for emergency situations that identified the tasks and responsibilities of governmental bodies involved in receiving asylum-seekers and providing them with shelter.

12. **Mr. Elaghabash** (Sudan) said that the Sudan had taken key steps to boost national security, stability and reconstruction. First, in January 2011, the Government had held a referendum on self-determination for South Sudan in the framework of the North-South peace agreement. In July 2011, it had furthermore signed a peace accord with the Justice and Equality Movement that included provisions on the voluntary return of displaced persons and refugees in the Sudan. Despite an extremely difficult economy, the Sudan stood ready to receive a large number of displaced persons and refugees, although services in refugee camps needed to be improved, particularly in the area of access to water and sanitation. In general, the Sudan needed to improve its infrastructure, social services and institutions. Assistance from UNHCR and the international community with training and capacity-building was more vital than ever. The problem of refugees living in prolonged exile in the Sudan presented a tremendous challenge. The authorities took steps to help those persons to become independent so as to enable them to lead a decent life until such time as a durable solution was found. Following a visit by UNHCR representatives to eastern Sudan in early 2011, the State had undertaken to work with the organization on a wide-ranging programme designed to provide practical solutions to refugee problems.

13. **Ms. Constantinescu** (Romania) said that the Romanian authorities had worked with the local UNHCR office on improving the national legislation on statelessness. Romania had taken steps to improve its asylum procedures while supporting efforts to develop a fair and efficient common European asylum system. Following the events in the first part of 2011 in North Africa and the Middle East, the number of asylum requests submitted to Romania had increased by 60 per cent compared to the same period the previous year. The national authorities had opened up a new centre in the south of the country which could house up to 100 asylum-seekers. In cooperation with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) they had set up an emergency transit centre in Timisoara. Lastly, the Government planned to extend its first-ever national refugee-resettlement programme.

14. **Mr. Fric** (Observer for Slovakia) said that his country met all its obligations for protection of refugees as a member of the European Union and also provided subsidiary protection to refugees. The Government had responded positively to a request from UNHCR that it should participate in resettlement transfers of refugees. However, Slovakia was not yet a destination for refugee resettlement; it was only a transit country. On the basis of a trilateral agreement between the Government of Slovakia, UNHCR and IOM, the authorities had arranged for 98 Palestinian refugees to be transferred from Iraq in 2010 and for the transfer of 46 Afghan women and children in 2011. Another group of refugees was expected to arrive shortly at the emergency transit centre in Humenne. In 2010, Slovakia had taken part in the European pilot project (EUREMA) on the relocation of particularly vulnerable groups granted international protection in Malta to 1 of the 10 European Union countries participating in the pilot.

15. **Mr. Mutomb Mujing** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that he endorsed the statement that the representative of Lesotho had made on behalf of the Group of African States at the 648th meeting. After years of armed conflict that had triggered mass internal and transborder population displacements, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had embarked on a process to re-establish peace and internal security. As security had improved, more than 300,000 Congolese refugees living in neighbouring countries had returned, together with upwards of a million internally displaced persons. However, there were still 403,464 refugees in neighbouring countries, of whom 124,000 were in the Republic of the Congo, 60,000 in Uganda, the same number in Rwanda, 28,000 in Burundi, 15,000 in the Central African Republic, 13,000 in Angola, 12,000 in Zambia, 7,000 in South Sudan and 25,000 in different countries in southern Africa. Around 1.7 million internally displaced persons were still waiting for the opportunity to return home. The Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCU), spared no effort to improve conditions in areas of return in order to encourage returns, and agreements had been signed in 2011 with neighbouring countries on voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees. The Democratic Republic of the Congo looked to UNHCR to call a regional meeting with countries of origin and countries of asylum to establish the necessary mechanisms to deal with the invocation of the cessation clause with respect to certain refugees, namely, 8,000 Angolan and 55,000 Rwandan refugees.

16. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he appreciated the efficiency of the emergency operation launched in response to the new influx of refugees arriving from the Blue Nile State. He welcomed the willingness of the Government of Angola to cooperate with UNHCR on facilitating the return of Angolan refugees pursuant to the application of the cessation clause. He commended Serbia for its commitment to resolving refugee problems in conjunction with the other countries of the region and announced that he would participate in the ministerial conference to be held in Belgrade in November 2011. He urged the international community to provide its full support at the donors' conference. He said that Guinea played a crucial role in refugee protection in West Africa and that remediation activities in the parts of Guinea devastated by the massive inflow of refugees must be supported. He congratulated Mexico on enacting an outstanding law on subsidiary protection for refugees and on launching an appeal for the eradication of statelessness. He applauded the efforts of Bulgaria to improve its asylum system and to implement an efficient resettlement programme. The international community must support the strategy developed by the Government of the Sudan in cooperation with UNHCR so as to improve refugee assistance in camps and urban areas in the Sudan.

17. He commended Romania on the steps that it had taken to establish a refugee-transit and protection centre and improve its asylum system and on its participation in the relocation programme for refugees in Malta. Lastly, he reiterated his commitment to

assisting refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to supporting their voluntary repatriation.

18. **Mr. Asadov** (Observer for Azerbaijan) said that, owing to the armed occupation of some parts of Azerbaijani territory by Armenia, Azerbaijan hosted more than a million refugees and internally displaced persons. The Government had discussed ways of resolving the problems of displaced persons with the High Commissioner during his visit to Azerbaijan in May 2011. Significant progress towards improving living conditions for refugees and displaced persons in Azerbaijan had been achieved under bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects, particularly those focused on housing and employment. The poverty rate among displaced persons had fallen from 74 to 23 per cent. In February 2011, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan had promulgated a decree providing for additional measures to be implemented to improve housing and living conditions for internally displaced people. A programme to promote long-term repatriation was being prepared. The damage caused in the territories occupied by Armenia would be assessed and remediation work would be done as soon as the occupation ended.

19. **Ms. Mpariwa** (Observer for Zimbabwe) said that the Government of National Unity that had come to power in 2008 had exerted considerable endeavours to normalize the economic situation and to promote growth; the quality of education and health services for nationals and refugees had improved as a result. Zimbabwe hosted 5,557 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from the Great Lakes region. Over 80 per cent of them lived at the Tongogara camp and the remainder in urban areas, especially Harare. The Government, which regarded voluntary repatriation as the preferred durable solution for most refugees, had received a Rwandan Government delegation in May 2011 in connection with efforts being made to encourage Rwandan refugees to return to their country. Zimbabwe would shortly ratify the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, which was on the agenda of the Parliament.

20. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that close to half a million people had fled abroad or had been internally displaced in Georgia following ethnic cleansing operations in two regions of the country. Ten per cent of the population of Georgia was composed of internally displaced persons. The factors precluding the safe and dignified return of Georgian refugees and internally displaced persons were directly linked to the foreign military occupation of Abkhazia and of the Tskhinvali region in South Ossetia. Georgia had been making its best efforts to provide displaced persons with a decent living environment and durable housing solutions. The Government of Georgia was concerned about the budget cuts at UNHCR, which would lead to the closure of the organization's offices in Akhmeta and Gori, staffing reductions in other offices and the downscaling or discontinuation of special programmes such as the housing reparations programme for residents of the Gali district in Abkhazia. She appealed to the High Commissioner to organize the smooth handover of certain programmes to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to make sure that the issue of internal displacement was not bypassed in the outcome document of the ministerial meeting due to be held in December 2011 to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the fiftieth anniversary of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

21. **Ms. Nahayo** (Observer for Burundi) said that she fully supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of African States. While progress on the repatriation of Burundian refugees following the 2010 elections had been slow, more than half a million Burundian refugees had returned home since 2002, mainly from the United Republic of Tanzania, which had furthermore naturalized 162,000 Burundian refugees who had been there for a long time. A tripartite agreement with Uganda was due to be signed shortly to provide for the voluntary and durable return of Burundian refugees. The Government of Burundi was compiling a record of the personal details of internally displaced persons with

a view to the implementation of a plan of action to allow them to reside in a safe location, on a durable basis to benefit from social integration and access to the same living standards as the rest of the population and free choice of domicile for internally displaced persons.

22. Burundi planned to ratify the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention) by December 2011 at the latest. A total of 1,800 Congolese refugees had benefited from assisted repatriation since October 2010. Burundi had set up an advice centre for refugees and asylum-seekers in Bujumbura and the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons had launched a mass information campaign in early 2011 on statelessness problems. With accession to the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, Burundi would soon have the framework in which to address the needs of the 2,000 stateless persons present in the country. Lastly, she welcomed the deployment of Burundian and Ugandan troops as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

23. **Ms. Pictet-Althann** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that additional human and financial resources were needed in order to deal with the increasing number of humanitarian crises. The Order's relief agency, Malteser International, provided food and medication to about 73,000 persons in the northern districts of Isiolo and Marsabit in Kenya. The Order remained engaged in the provinces of North-Kivu and South-Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it sought to secure a steady food supply and to rehabilitate the area's transport infrastructure. In Thailand, Malteser International provided medical services to refugees fleeing Myanmar who were living in the Mae Hong Son camps. Over the past five years, under a large-scale resettlement programme, many refugees had migrated to other countries. In Sri Lanka, Malteser International assisted internally displaced persons and contributed to the resettlement of returnees, the construction of infrastructure in resettlement areas and the delivery of support to vulnerable host communities. In the Mediterranean, the Order of Malta Italian Relief Corps was assisting migrants fleeing North Africa. In just one night, close to the Italian island of Lampedusa, doctors from the Order had helped 852 migrants arriving from Tunisia.

24. **Mr. Sonko** (Observer for the Gambia) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement that the representative of Lesotho had made on behalf of the Group of African States at the 648th meeting and to draw attention to the fundamental importance of addressing the root causes of refugee situations. Refugee numbers were falling in Africa, especially in West Africa, but the number of internally displaced persons had increased significantly. Indeed, that situation had prompted the African Union to establish the Kampala Convention. His Government welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to partner the Gambian authorities in order to provide for the smooth completion of the Sierra Leonean refugee situation in 2008–2009. It hoped that similar initiatives would be taken in 2012 to resolve the Liberian refugee situation.

25. **Mr. Rogers** (Observer for Sierra Leone) said that additional land for the construction of shelters and for agricultural activities had been allocated to refugees in his country with a view to facilitating their local integration. With support from the UNHCR branch office in Sierra Leone, the Government was offering training to the relevant stakeholders. Sierra Leone appealed to the international community to meet the needs of the growing number of refugees, particularly Liberian refugees, who wished to benefit from the local integration programme in the light of the forthcoming invocation of the cessation clause for those persons.

26. **Mr. Madula** (Observer for Malawi) said that the integrity of the institution of asylum must be preserved and that asylum-seekers must not be confused with those who passed themselves off as refugees but were merely trying to get across the country in order to reach the south of the continent. Malawi would soon have a human-rights based refugee

policy in place that should meet needs more effectively and a new law that should help to combat the scourges of human trafficking and human smuggling in Malawi.

27. **Mr. Bari-Bari** (Somalia) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Lesotho on behalf of the Group of African States at the 648th meeting. He strongly condemned the attack in Mogadishu carried out by the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab on 4 October 2011 and reaffirmed his Government's determination to combat the organization's activities. The facts and figures on Somalia were shocking: some 750,000 people were at immediate risk of famine, a million people were refugees in neighbouring countries and around 4 million — half the population — were in need of emergency aid. He called on the international community to support specific initiatives implemented by Somalia, like the Prime Minister's "Water for Sustainable Peace" initiative, with a view to ending the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

28. The Government of Somalia welcomed the High Commissioner's initiative to convene a high-level panel to help formulate a set of proposals on measures that the international community could take to improve the situation of Somali refugees. He appealed to friendly countries and to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, AMISOM and international humanitarian aid agencies to help Somalia to improve coordination of humanitarian aid operations. According to a joint report by the Center for American Progress and the One Earth Foundation, up to 1.5 million Somalis had died due to violence or famine since the beginning of the conflict in 1991 and more than 2.3 million were refugees or displaced persons. The international community, including the Somali diaspora, had spent just over US\$ 55 billion on aid for Somalia but tangible results had yet to be achieved. Somalia urged fraternal States to help it to put an end to the 20-year emergency once and for all.

29. **Ms. Abagarian** (Observer for Armenia) welcomed the decision of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia to work together to resolve the refugee issue and said that the initiative could serve as an example for other countries. Most refugees and displaced persons in Armenia had found themselves facing a catastrophe following the military aggression by Azerbaijan against Upper Karabakh and Armenia. In the absence of security assurances, voluntary return was no longer an option for the Armenians; resettlement and local integration were now the only options. In that connection, the purpose of the donors' conference that the Government of Armenia had organized in May 2011 had been to find a durable solution for the refugees and displaced persons by offering housing to the 4,000 families involved. The Government was grateful to the States that had contributed and hoped that they would continue to do so. On the political front, Armenia was convinced that, following international recognition of the Republic of Upper Karabakh, the issue of voluntary return of refugees could be resolved jointly by the authorities of the Republic of Upper Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

30. **Mr. Asadov** (Observer for Azerbaijan) stressed that Upper Karabakh was an integral part of the unalienable territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

31. **Ms. Barnes** (Observer for Liberia) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Lesotho on behalf of the Group of African States. The situation in Liberia following the holding of elections and the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) would allow the Government to ensure the safety of citizens and residents in the context of a fragile peace. Liberia was facing a number of challenges, in particular involving: the need to repatriate Liberian refugees who had long been in exile in the West African subregion as a matter of the utmost importance; the issue of delivering ongoing protection to Liberian refugees wishing to remain in a country of asylum; the rapid implementation in June 2012 of a comprehensive plan on the cessation clause; the lack of resources to fund reintegration programmes for Liberian returnees; and major logistical problems that were hampering humanitarian operations in Liberia.

32. Some 178,000 Ivorian refugees in four provinces of Liberia had received prime facie recognition of their status in December 2010. Moreover, more than 61,000 Liberian refugees reportedly continued to apply for asylum in other countries in the subregion, while from 25,000 to 30,000 had reportedly decided to return home. The Government of Liberia had adopted a policy providing for the detention of all members of armed groups in Liberia in separate centres and had released a sum of US\$ 114,000 for the purpose. Since June 2011, 88 persons had been arrested and detained. However, extra funding was needed to launch the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Côte d'Ivoire. Liberia recalled that international financial support was still needed for the reintegration of Liberians repatriated in 2011 and also for the protection of Ivorian refugees in Liberia.

33. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he was aware of the assistance that the Government of Azerbaijan had given to displaced persons and that he remained committed to supporting the voluntary repatriation of those concerned as soon as the political situation allowed it. Even though it was experiencing major political and economic problems, Zimbabwe had very generously decided to maintain its refugee protection policy. With the Government of Georgia, UNHCR was looking for solutions for displaced persons. All the programmes in Georgia were taken into account in the UNHCR budget, but the organization was not able to authorize funding for 2012 beyond a certain amount, because there had been a sharp fall in contributions in 2011. Burundi should be congratulated on its outstanding work to integrate repatriated Burundian nationals, its efforts to protect displaced persons and establish an asylum system and its participation in AMISOM. The importance of cooperation between UNHCR and Malteser International in the countries mentioned by the representative of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta must also be recalled.

34. He commended Gambia on its very open refugee policy and expressed appreciation to the Government of Sierra Leone for establishing an asylum system and developing a very generous local-integration policy for refugees. On the subject of Malawi, he recognized the need for a regional approach to combating inflows of illegal migrants and related trafficking. On behalf of UNHCR, he wished to express profound solidarity with the Somali people and to affirm his determination to help Somalis at home and elsewhere. He said that UNHCR enjoyed active and constructive cooperation with Azerbaijan and Armenia in humanitarian activities. While he acknowledged the political differences between the two countries, he did not consider the Executive Committee to be the right forum to address them. He thanked the Government and people of Liberia for the solidarity that they had shown to Ivorian refugees, notwithstanding the consequences for the economy and security concerns. He called for international solidarity to resolve the situation of displaced Ivorian nationals once and for all.

35. **Mr. Dumitriu** (Observer for the Council of Europe) said that the Council of Europe had adopted a framework document setting out the main elements of the Council's work on migration issues, including the integration of migrants, the observance of fundamental rights in the context of asylum and repatriation procedures, and the status of displaced persons. An interregional dialogue on refugees and other forcibly displaced persons held jointly by UNHCR and the Council of Europe in June 2011 in Strasbourg had brought together, for the first time, judges from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights. That cooperative initiative, which had been established under the aegis of the United Nations or specialized institutions, should be pursued with a focus on tangible measures.

36. The Council of Europe wished to draw attention to the increasing number of applications and appeals for asylum and refugee status that had been lodged with the European Court of Human Rights. Given the number of cases of displacement since the

“Arab Spring” and in the wake of conflicts or natural disasters, that trend was likely to continue. The Council of Europe hoped that the issue would be taken up by the Council and UNHCR.

37. **Mr. Abdiker** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that the recipients of assistance in Libya had not been refugees but mostly migrant workers, which was why UNHCR had helped IOM to repatriate more than 210,000 persons from 54 countries. The fact that responsibility for camp coordination and management was shared was another indicator of the strengthened cooperation between IOM and UNHCR. UNHCR took the lead in humanitarian emergency operations mounted in response to conflicts and ceded it to IOM in the case of natural disasters. IOM had devoted some 500 projects to the issue of environmental migration and played a proactive role in research and action planning. IOM and UNHCR cooperated closely on that issue in the framework of the cluster approach, participation in the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the United Nations negotiations on climate change. Since their establishment, the two organizations had worked side by side on resettlement of refugees, drawing on their respective competitive advantages. Together, and with the participation of the destination country, they helped tens of thousands of refugees a year to begin a new life.

38. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said the UNHCR attached considerable importance to its partnership with the Council of Europe. The cooperation with IOM operated more on the strategic level and included policy formulation. UNHCR and IOM also had a shared vision.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.