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**Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees
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Summary record of the 661st meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 3 October 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Arango Olmos (Vice-Chairperson)(Colombia)

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In the absence of Mr. Knutsson (Sweden), Ms. Arango Olmos (Colombia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General debate (continued)

1. **Ms. Raoul** (Congo) thanked the international community for the assistance it had provided in the wake of a tragic explosion at a munitions depot in Brazzaville in March 2012.

2. She said that the cessation clause had been applied to Angolan citizens in Congo in June 2012 and would be applied to Rwandan refugees in June 2013. The repatriation of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were currently in the south of her country had been delayed owing to a lack of resources. To date, only 26,000 of the 125,000 refugees from the province of Equateur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had returned to their country of origin.

3. The cessation clause revoking the refugee status of Congolese citizens in Gabon had entered into force in July 2011. However, progress on returns was slow. It was regrettable that so many conflicts in the world were leading to massive population displacement and she called for more education for peace throughout society.

4. **Ms. Mpariwa** (Observer for Zimbabwe) said that her country had continued to receive large numbers of migrants during the previous year, mainly from the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region. In fulfilment of a pledge made during the 2011 Ministerial Meeting, Zimbabwe had set up a temporary reception centre on the north-eastern border with Mozambique. The services and care provided at the centre had gone a long way towards protecting refugees and persons of concern within mixed migration flows.

5. Despite the economic challenges that it faced, Zimbabwe was host to over 6,000 refugees and asylum seekers. Over 80 per cent of them lived in the Tongogara refugee camp, while the remainder resided in urban areas, particularly Harare. Her Government and UNHCR had been making good progress on joint preparations for the application of the Rwandan cessation clause. They had begun with the formation of a task force. Other initiatives included training on the cessation clause, the publication of information pamphlets and the stipulation of time frames.

6. **Mr. Digna** (Sudan) said that Sudan was currently hosting some 400,000 refugees, most of whom were not registered. That posed security, organizational and logistical problems for the authorities. The Government did its utmost to address challenges facing asylum seekers including human trafficking and smuggling. Regional and international coordination was needed to tackle those issues in an effective manner.

7. He called on the international community to help his country provide protection and services for the refugees living in camps in Sudan. During his visit in January 2012, the High Commissioner had launched the Transitional Solutions Initiative. Expectations about the outcomes of that Initiative were high.

8. There was a need for greater stability in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions, especially to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees. He urged UNHCR and the international community to assist with development in those regions as well. He thanked the Ethiopian authorities for the assistance they had provided to Sudan.

9. **Mr. Ismail** (Somalia) expressed gratitude to all the countries that had hosted Somali refugees since 1991 and those that had provided asylum to the Somali people. He also thanked Norway, Switzerland and UNHCR for awarding the 2012 Nansen Refugee Award to Hawa Aden Mohamed, an outstanding Somali woman.

10. The recent liberation of Kismayo City should facilitate the stabilization of the entire Lower Juba region. While there might still be some security vacuums, the territories that had been liberated in South-Central Somalia would need to be secured to encourage IDPs to return voluntarily to their regions of origin. That in turn would facilitate the voluntary return of Somali refugees from neighbouring countries. In order to sustain the stabilization of the newly liberated areas in South Somalia, the international community should continue supporting Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, helping to create a security situation on the ground that would encourage the repatriation of all Somali refugees. Humanitarian and reconstruction activities must benefit all regions of the country equally, and new institutions in Somalia would need urgent technical capacity support to coordinate humanitarian, reconstruction and recovery activities.

11. **Mr. Oyarce** (Chile) said that the increase in the number of refugees and IDPs worldwide and the reports of abuses and violations, particularly of women and children, called for urgent, comprehensive solutions. The international community should address the root causes of that complex reality, a task which would require strong political will and coordination. He commended UNHCR for strengthening inter-agency cooperation and said that regional approaches generally helped in finding durable solutions for refugees. In that regard, he stressed the importance of a decision of the Colombian Government to begin peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

12. In Chile, measures had been taken in recent years to improve domestic legislation and policies on migration and refugee protection. The 2010 law on refugee protection provided that individuals applying for refugee status could be granted temporary residency. That provision granted those persons access to the labour market and to health and education services. The law also provided for special protection regimes for children and victims of violence.

13. **Mr. Alexandre** (Observer for Haiti) said that amendments to the Haitian Constitution introduced in 2012 had opened up the possibility for recognition of dual nationality, even for children whose parents had not recovered their Haitian nationality but who could prove their ancestry. That would rule out the possibility of Haitians and their children being left stateless. Steps were also being taken to ensure that Haitian citizens living abroad could register their children's births. The Government was preparing to ratify the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

14. An interministerial committee was currently considering ways of improving the management of migration flows. He welcomed the United States decision to extend temporary protected status for Haitian citizens for an additional 18 months. In order to improve the situation of IDPs and rehouse people currently living in six camps, the Government of Haiti was renovating 16 districts. In February 2012, 400 new houses had been made available to low-income families left homeless after the 2010 earthquake. Nonetheless, as the High Commissioner had seen during his visit, over 370,000 people were still living in approximately 1,000 improvised camps.

15. **Mr. Mussa** (Observer for Malawi) said that Malawi currently hosted over 15,600 refugees and asylum seekers. On average, 200 asylum seekers entered the country every month. However, it was unclear whether all the new entrants were genuine refugees or whether some were simply transferring from other countries where camps were being closed. In addition, a number had been identified as possible criminals involved in human trafficking and smuggling. Several hundred foreign nationals had entered Malawi illegally. When intercepted in other countries, they were sent back as if they were asylum seekers from Malawi. Efforts were therefore being made to strengthen border screening systems to ensure that genuine asylum seekers were identified.

16. To alleviate the pressure on the country's meagre resources, Malawi needed more assistance to improve services for asylum seekers and refugees and to build structures and institutions for refugee management. In the search for durable solutions, some 208 refugees had been resettled abroad and an additional 1,000 would be resettled by the end of 2012.

17. **Mr. Tcharie** (Togo) said that there were some 26,000 refugees of 21 nationalities in Togo, including 5,500 Ivorians who were living in Lomé or the nearby Avepozo camp. They were all protected under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the Kampala Convention. Togo had always respected the principle of non-refoulement and did its utmost to provide for refugees and asylum seekers. In May 2012, the Government had ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and was currently revising its refugee legislation. A centre for asylum seekers was being built, and the authorities were considering introducing identity cards for refugees.

18. Given the current climate of peace in his country, it was clear that the reasons many Togolese refugees wished to remain abroad had little to do with security or politics. He urged UNHCR to take appropriate measures in that regard. He added that, of the 209 Sri Lankans that had arrived in Togo in November 2011, 17 were awaiting voluntary repatriation.

19. **Mr. Rogers** (Observer for Sierra Leone) said that his Government was committed to ratifying the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The 2006 Citizenship Act was evidence of the Government's determination to prevent and reduce statelessness, providing as it did for children to acquire citizenship from their mothers and for recognition of dual citizenship. In addition, the country's liberal birth registration system also helped to prevent statelessness. The Government had revised the 2010 local integration land agreement developed for rural refugees and had issued identity cards to all registered refugees.

20. Following the application of the cessation clause to Liberian refugees, the authorities had undertaken interviews and assessments of 437 exemption applications from Liberian refugees who did not wish to integrate locally or to be repatriated. Some 2,713 Liberian refugees had been integrated into their local communities and involved in agricultural activities. Given the current volatility in West Africa, he called on UNHCR and the international community to assist in ensuring the sustainability of integrating communities and in strengthening the capacity of his country's relatively new asylum infrastructure.

21. **Ms. Assaker** (Lebanon) reaffirmed her country's readiness to cooperate with UNHCR to ease the suffering of Syrian civilians who sought refuge in Lebanon. She reiterated her Government's support for the revised regional emergency plan and called on the international community to increase its contributions.

22. She said that the Transformative Agenda merited further consultation at the intergovernmental level and that her Government supported self-reliance as a positive transitional measure. That would enable refugees to improve their livelihoods and skills and contribute to their personal development and education, preparing them for durable solutions once their situation was resolved.

23. She recalled the plight of Palestine refugees and called for international support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). She called for a just, fair and comprehensive solution for the predicament of the Palestine refugees in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions.

24. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) said that he wished to express his personal admiration for the way that the Republic of the Congo had handled the human fallout of the

devastating explosion in Brazzaville in 2012. He called on the international community to recognize that Zimbabwe had always maintained its protection regime for refugees. UNHCR was at the disposal of Zimbabwe to assist with managing mixed migration flows. He commended the Government and security forces of the Sudan for their efforts towards combating trafficking in persons, and called for a commitment to be made to enable the Sudan and other countries in the region to continue to fight criminal networks. He applauded the excellent cooperation of the Government of Sudan and its partners in implementing the Transitional Solutions Initiative and expressed the hope that the peace talks with South Sudan would yield further positive results.

25. It was a time of hope in Somalia and, Ms. Mohamed, winner of the 2012 Nansen Refugee Award, symbolized the country's ability to overcome its hardships. Protecting Haitian refugees abroad, especially from statelessness, was a priority focus of UNHCR activities in the region. UNHCR would gladly assist Haiti in ensuring that all Haitians were issued identity papers.

26. On the subject of Malawi, UNHCR was willing to support efforts to identify individuals and determine their status in the context of mixed migration flows. Togo was to be commended for its openness to, and care of, refugees and for ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. As for Sierra Leone, he confirmed that UNHCR was reducing its assistance, because the country was a success story on several fronts, including with regard to the establishment of a stable democratic regime. He was deeply appreciative of the generous approach of Sierra Leone to the application of the cessation clause for Liberian refugees and considered that Lebanon deserved the solidarity and support of the international community in dealing with the influx of Syrian refugees. It was crucial to avoid the collapse of the refugee protection system in the Middle East as well as the involvement of Palestine refugees in the Syrian conflict.

27. **Ms. Abgarian** (Observer for Armenia) said that between 1988 and 1991 Armenia had received more than 360,000 refugees from Azerbaijan as a result of the ethnic cleansing in Sumgait, Baku, Kirovabad and other cities that had been carried out by Azerbaijani authorities in response to the peaceful expression by the population of Nagorny Karabakh of their desire for self-determination. During that period, Armenia had had the highest number of refugees per 1,000 population. The presence of hundreds of thousands of refugees in the region, resulting from the destruction of settlements in Nagorny Karabakh, was the direct consequence of an aggressive policy by the Azerbaijani authorities, which carried full responsibility for unleashing violence against the peaceful people of Nagorny Karabakh. As ongoing racism and discrimination against Armenians meant that refugees could not return to Azerbaijan, where their life and security continued to be at risk, the Government of Armenia was committed to integrating them into Armenian society. However, negotiations on voluntary repatriation of the refugees could be undertaken once the status of Nagorny Karabakh had been determined.

28. Expressing the wish that all States would avoid the politicization of refugee issues, she said she regretted that Azerbaijan, upon the recent accession of Armenia to the Executive Committee, had spread anti-Armenian propaganda based on erroneous information. When a country like Azerbaijan claimed to have numerous refugees yet at the same time increased its military spending, made aggressive statements and incited its citizens to hatred of Armenia, then all of its statements of commitment to international human rights and humanitarian law regarding refugees were void. Such behaviour not only tarnished the reputation of Azerbaijan, but also demonstrated disrespect for the objectivity, impartiality and non-political nature of the body. The delegation called on UNHCR to ensure that Azerbaijan did not abuse its position as a member of the Executive Committee.

29. Despite resource constraints, the Government directed its efforts towards the ambitious goal of ending the refugee situation in Armenia. She reaffirmed the readiness of

Armenia to cooperate with UNHCR and the international community in efforts to build capacity, protect the rights of refugees and promote refugee access to education and empowerment opportunities. She wished to thank UNHCR for its continued support of the Community Technology Access project in Armenia.

30. **Mr. Beshta** (Observer for Ukraine) extended his condolences for the loss of the five UNHCR staff and called on parties to conflicts to adhere strictly to international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of humanitarian and civilian personnel. He said that, in the face of the increase in numbers of refugees and displaced persons, Ukraine supported the call to further strengthen preventive diplomacy and bring about rapid resolution of conflicts.

31. Ukraine had taken part in evacuation efforts during the Libyan crisis in 2011 and had taken steps to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. He commended the solidarity shown by the Governments of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in keeping their borders open and providing shelter and essentials to those in need.

32. In fulfilment of the pledge that it had made at the Ministerial Meeting held in December 2011 to further strengthen its domestic asylum system and accede to the conventions on statelessness, Ukraine was finalizing internal preparations for accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The relevant documentation would be submitted shortly for consideration by the Ukrainian parliament. Ukraine had set up a national asylum system in conformity with international and European standards. In 2011, legislation had been adopted on refugees and persons requiring additional or temporary protection, under which two protection institutions had been established, and provisions on supplementary guarantees for refugee families and maximum protection for child asylum seekers had been introduced. Furthermore, Ukraine was creating the necessary conditions for the smooth integration of refugees and asylum seekers, notably by enabling them to realize their intellectual and professional potential.

33. **Mr. Thioune** (Observer for Senegal) said that additional protection was provided for refugees in Senegal and for their rights under Act No. 68-27 of 24 July 1968, as amended. An interministerial steering committee to improve conditions for refugees, returnees and displaced persons had been set up in keeping with the State's vision of humanitarianism.

34. In 1989, Senegal had granted *prima facie* refugee status to Mauritanian refugees and had since signed a tripartite agreement with Mauritania and UNHCR to repatriate in safety and dignity all Mauritanian refugees who wished to return home. The last group of returnees had arrived in Mauritania on 25 March 2012. Refugees who chose to stay in Senegal were offered integration support with a view to possible naturalization. In that connection, the Government, in cooperation with UNHCR, had issued more than 10,000 identity cards to refugees, thus providing them with the opportunity to gain access to credit and training. The Mauritanian situation might be resolved, but other crises were emerging; therefore, regional refugee management committees had been reactivated and contingency plans put in place to respond to potential emergency situations, notably in Mali.

35. **Ms. Pictet-Althann** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Sovereign Military Order of Malta carried out its humanitarian activities in more than 120 countries. The Order participated in a variety of projects in the fields of social and health care, food aid, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, reconstruction and economic development. It had recently set up the Global Fund for Forgotten People to support projects that assisted people without recourse, support networks or resources. She wished to thank the High Commissioner for having chosen "faith and protection" as the

theme for his next Dialogue on Protection Challenges and said that the Order of Malta looked forward to contributing actively to the debate.

36. The Lebanese branch of the Order was currently providing medical assistance to a growing number of Syrian refugees pouring into Lebanon, while Malteser International was providing families who had fled to Damascus with relief items. First aid and ambulance services were being provided in northern Burkina Faso, where over 65,000 Malian refugees had fled. The relative remoteness of the area made it difficult to ensure that refugees received the health care they needed. Malteser International had been monitoring the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and registering IDPs in the region since January 2012. In cooperation with the World Food Programme, it organized food distribution to 37,500 IDPs, ensured access to clean drinking water and health-care centres and provided medical and psychosocial assistance to victims of sexual assault.

37. In Sri Lanka, as refugees and IDPs had been returning home to the Eastern Province, the focus had shifted to development, in particular water, sanitation and hygiene promotion.

38. For more than 17 years, Malteser International had been responsible for health care in two refugee camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border housing more than 35,000 refugees. A new water, sanitation and hygiene project, co-financed by the European Union, had been under way since 2011 for the benefit of both the refugees and the local communities. Lastly, in the Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar, where refugees were returning from Bangladesh, Malteser International had established 32 mother-and-child centres to support malnourished children and their families.

39. **Mr. Sonko** (Gambia) said that the National Commission for Refugees of the Gambia spearheaded efforts to protect and assist refugees and IDPs. The UNHCR office in Banjul had organized a training programme on refugee status determination for Commission staff, and the Commission looked forward to more such capacity-building initiatives. In February 2012, the Gambia had received approximately 2,000 refugees from the Senegalese region of Cassamance and the Commission, in collaboration with UNHCR, had organized an emergency donor meeting to respond to the influx. Food and non-food items had been procured and distributed to the refugees. Awareness-raising was used to help address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence in refugee settings.

40. Following application of the cessation clause to Liberian refugees, the Commission and UNHCR had facilitated the return of Liberian refugees who had opted for voluntary repatriation. Those that chose to remain in the Gambia were issued residence permits, which paved the way for local integration. Only eight families had applied for exemption from the cessation clause and their cases were before the National Commission for Refugees.

41. The Government was preparing to reassess the refugee protection and assistance requirements of the country. The planned joint assessment would doubtless result in solid recommendations being produced on durable solutions.

42. His Government appealed to the High Commissioner to encourage burden sharing and support for host communities. It welcomed the involvement of UNHCR in issues concerning IDPs and expressed the hope that UNHCR and other United Nations bodies would continue to partner with national Governments to address the specific plight of IDPs.

43. **Mr. García** (Philippines) said that his Government was pleased with its cooperation with UNHCR and was following with interest the UNHCR assessment of the costs and impact of hosting refugees in developing and middle-income countries. The Government was developing a policy and operational framework in relation to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and acting on its pledge to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Minister of

Justice had recently signed a circular on refugee status determination that provided clear administrative guidelines to that end. Steps had also been taken towards the fulfilment of the State's other pledges, namely: increasing its 2012 contribution to UNHCR programmes to US\$ 100,000; issuing machine-readable travel documents to refugees and stateless persons; continuing to monitor the issue of statelessness; initiating the process for accession to the Convention for the Reduction of Statelessness; and continuing to lead the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the development of a human rights framework in which to address issues concerning migrants, trafficking victims, refugees and stateless persons.

44. He expressed support for the Nansen Award initiative launched by Norway and Switzerland, and said that he looked forward to participating actively in the proposed consultative committee. The Philippines, along with Bangladesh and other countries, had sponsored an initiative presented earlier in 2012 at the Human Rights Council on addressing the adverse effects of climate change on human rights. The Philippines was also keen to develop mechanisms for the protection and evacuation of migrants and third-country nationals in times of crisis.

45. **Ms. Dupuy Lasserre** (Observer for Uruguay), drawing attention to the efforts of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States in relation to resettlement, said that her country intended to honour the pledges made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the 2011 Ministerial Meeting. Indeed, the National Refugee Commission had drafted a bill on statelessness which had been submitted to relevant ministries for comments, after which it would be brought before parliament. Recognizing that the urban profile used in the original resettlement programme did not match that of certain persons in need of resettlement, the State had established a pilot project to resettle individuals with a rural background. Lastly, the Government was examining ways to strengthen the permanent secretariat of the National Refugee Commission.

46. **Mr. Caspi** (Israel) said that Israel wished to join those who had voiced their support for freedom for the people of the Syrian Arab Republic.

47. Over the years, Israel had opened its doors to hundreds of thousands of Jews from Arab countries and the former Soviet Union and had also offered protection to individuals from countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Viet Nam. Israel complied strictly with international conventions, including the principle of non-refoulement. In recent years, it had experienced an influx of more than 65,000 people, mostly Sudanese and Eritreans, who had illegally entered the country via its southern border with Egypt. Upon initial questioning, most claimed that they had come in search of a better life, not out of fear of persecution in their country of origin. Israel worked closely with other countries on developing appropriate legal mechanisms to cope with the challenge of policing borders. However, the situation was complicated by the fact that the country had a long, unfenced land border with Africa, making it a very accessible destination, and the fact that the tightening of borders in Europe encouraged many to turn instead to Israel. Accordingly, the Government had recently implemented two border control strategies: building a fence along the southern border with Egypt and establishing a centre to house individuals who had unlawfully entered the country. The centre would provide individuals with food, shelter and health and education services. Its main purpose was to reduce the financial incentive that encouraged people to enter the country unlawfully, while meeting the basic needs of refugees already there.

48. Israel had developed an effective and efficient system of processing asylum requests, which was in full compliance with both the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol thereto and was run in collaboration with UNHCR. The Ministry of the Interior conducted extensive interviews with all asylum seekers in their own language, while an advisory committee reviewed asylum cases and determined refugee

status. All asylum seekers could request a judicial review of their case and even petition the High Court of Justice in the event of allegations of human rights violations.

49. **Mr. Dumitriu** (Council of Europe) said that the Council of Europe and UNHCR had recently embarked on discussions on the right to work for refugees. Employment was fundamental to the integration of refugees. There were cases where the lack of proper living conditions in the country of asylum prompted refugees to return to places where their life or freedom was at risk. The Council of Europe, as the guardian of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter, had started to analyse the limitations of the existing international and European standards and to identify the practical impediments to the enjoyment of the right to work and existing best practices at the national level.

50. Some of the directions the analysis could take included the gathering of data on refugees' access to the labour market, the application of the Social Charter collective complaints mechanism to matters of labour market access, and the exploitation of the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights.

51. **Mr. Chikh** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)) said that coordination and partnership must be the cornerstone of humanitarian responses. His organization had always argued for proper coordination of humanitarian aid, as exemplified by its own involvement as facilitator in the Syrian Humanitarian Forum and its joint action with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on the Sahel crisis. He reaffirmed the commitment of OIC to stand by UNHCR and its international partners in their humanitarian endeavours.

52. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner), replying to points raised, said that UNHCR remained committed to supporting the Armenian Government's efforts to fully integrate all refugees in Armenia. The assistance of the international community had been requested for the ongoing housing programme. There were many political dimensions to the region's problems. There was no humanitarian solution and it was not within the Executive Committee that political solutions could be found. Those issues could be properly addressed in the General Assembly or the Security Council.

53. The role of Ukraine was extremely important to UNHCR as an essential protection space in relation to the movements of people in Eastern Europe. UNHCR was ready to cooperate with the Government in order to improve its mechanisms for identifying those in need of protection and providing adequate protection and solutions.

54. Senegal had once again demonstrated great openness towards those looking for protection as reflected in its commitment to finding a durable solution for the Mauritanian refugees. He welcomed the announcement by the Sovereign Military Order of Malta concerning the Global Fund for Forgotten People. He counted on the Order's participation in the upcoming Dialogue on Protection in December 2012, which would focus on faith and protection. The Gambia was a small country yet it had been involved in a remarkable number of refugee crises in the region, showing great openness and generous hospitality. The Gambia could always count on the cooperation of UNHCR in the quest for protection and solutions.

55. Turning to the Philippines, he said that the emergency transit mechanism and the Government's collaboration on protection of internally displaced people were examples of that country's exemplary cooperation with his Office. He deeply appreciated the regional role that the Philippines played in enlarging protection space for refugees in the region.

56. He welcomed the news about the initiatives taken by the Government of Uruguay on statelessness and resettlement, which would increase its already very important role in protection in Latin America. He understood the enormous pressure that mixed population flows placed on Israel, given its physical size. The Israeli Government, Israeli civil society

and UNHCR engaged in dialogue and cooperation with the objective of ensuring that those who sought asylum in Israel would have their claims dealt with fairly.

57. The joint efforts of OIC and UNHCR had shown that the principles of refugee protection had deep roots both in international law and in the Islamic tradition. OIC had a key role to play in ensuring the effectiveness of global mechanisms, and he looked forward to its participation in the upcoming dialogue on faith and protection.

58. **Mr. Tickner** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that, during the current humanitarian crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, numerous national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in the region had been providing support to tens of thousands of people faced with little choice but to leave their homes and seek safety across borders, clearly applying the fundamental principles of the Federation, namely, humanity, independence, impartiality and neutrality, on a daily basis.

59. He drew attention to the forthcoming publication of the Federation's World Disasters Report, which would highlight the plight of forced migrants, and to a resolution on migration adopted at the 2011 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which mentioned the importance of refugee access to services, of Governments ensuring appropriate international protection, in line with relevant international law, and of adequate safeguards to protect the dignity and safety of all migrants. The full resolution was available on the Federation's website.

60. **Mr. Lonnbach** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that both UNHCR and IOM were increasingly called upon to address population movements due to multiple, complex crises. The challenge for both of them was to be adequately prepared and flexible.

61. UNHCR and IOM had always worked side by side in refugee resettlement operations. UNHCR identified refugee cases and IOM then carried out case processing, health assessments, cultural orientation courses and resettlement transportation. In that way UNHCR and IOM helped tens of thousands of refugees every year to begin new lives. The migration/refugee nexus was another area where UNHCR and IOM collaborated. Significant progress had been made in regional consultative processes supported by IOM and UNHCR. Lastly, on the issue of prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, he said that, under the leadership of the IOM Director General, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals had agreed to produce and share work plans and designate a senior focal point on that issue, and to support the establishment of a mechanism of joint community-based complaints.

62. **Mr. Schenkenberg van Mierop** (International Council of Voluntary Agencies), speaking on behalf of NGOs, said that the role of NGOs in the Executive Committee and the Standing Committee was to add value to debates in those bodies on the basis of their extensive operational experience with displacement situations. Their observations and views might differ from those of States or UNHCR. Member States who were less familiar with operational approaches of the NGOs were invited to enter into a frank and constructive dialogue in order to collectively improve the work done on behalf of displaced and stateless populations.

63. NGOs were very concerned about what appeared to be a "de-prioritization" by UNHCR of its work with IDPs, presumably with implicit or explicit donor support. Resources should be allocated on the basis of the vulnerability and need of displaced populations rather than the nature or profile of the affected population. If the already low levels of funding for IDP assistance were reduced, even minimum subsistence standards would be hard to achieve. Another priority should be refugees in urban settings: NGOs called on all States to recognize their legal status and protection needs. He commended UNHCR for its continued attention to persons of concern with disabilities and the

promotion of their access and inclusion across all programmes and services: it was essential to implement the age, gender, and diversity approach. NGOs commended UNHCR for its efforts to address sexual and gender-based violence. In that context, they also welcomed its work to ensure that safe access to cooking fuel was a standard part of all emergency response.

64. The unique mandate of UNHCR was what brought NGOs and UNHCR together. NGOs depended on UNHCR for its protection role and experience. At the same time, UNHCR needed NGOs for their operational capacity and expertise in niche areas. He hoped that the High Commissioner's structured dialogue on NGO-UNHCR partnerships would produce some tangible results in improving their work together.

65. NGOs valued the role of UNHCR in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, where the NGO consortia often found themselves closely aligned with the Office's views. He warned, however, that the Transformative Agenda should not be perceived as an exclusive, top-down, imposed process and called for increased engagement from the global humanitarian community and broader dialogue in order to improve humanitarian practice.

66. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) said that he appreciated the statement by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Humanitarian responses and actions were based on three pillars, the Red Cross Red Crescent family, NGOs and the United Nations. UNHCR relied on national Red Cross societies for much of its work, even, at times, for solutions to refugee situations. The IFRC report was always a very useful analytical tool.

67. IOM and UNHCR were linked primarily because of the asylum/migration nexus. The distinction between someone who moved because they wanted a better life and someone who moved because they were forced to was sometimes blurred, yet when the rights of migrants were fully respected the environment for asylum was easier to establish. The Libyan crisis in particular had given a very clear idea of how well the two agencies worked together.

68. He paid a tribute to the Executive Director of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), who was to move on to new functions elsewhere. Mr. Schenkenberg van Mierop had done wonderful work in establishing solid cooperation and would be sorely missed. The partnership between the NGO and the United Nations system must be strategic, not merely an implementing arrangement. The upcoming structured dialogue would not only enhance their partnership but would also solve some of the problems that existed in the way they worked in the field.

69. UNHCR was not giving less priority to internal displacement: he fully endorsed the comments of the representative of ICVA in that regard. It was true that earmarked funding for internal displacement had decreased, but un-earmarked funding had increased to compensate for it.

70. **Mr. Shirinov** (Azerbaijan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that in the statement by the representative of Armenia, accusations had been made against Azerbaijan and incorrect information given about the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Government of Azerbaijan could not pass over in silence the mass forced expulsion of the local Azerbaijani population from their homes by the Armenian Armed Forces during the war and was determined to keep up its strenuous efforts to update the international community about flagrant violations of the common norms of international humanitarian law by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia. Azerbaijan called on Armenia to withdraw its occupying forces from the territories of Azerbaijan; then it would be possible to negotiate outstanding issues with the population of Nagorno Karabakh.

71. What Armenia considered the exercise of the right to self-determination by the Armenian minority group in Azerbaijan had been unequivocally qualified by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly, as well as by other authoritative international organizations, as the illegal use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The illegal nature of the separatist entity and the structures established by the Republic of Armenia in the occupied territory of Azerbaijan had been repeatedly stated at the international level in the most unambiguous manner.

72. No State in the international community recognized a separatist entity as independent. The Republic of Azerbaijan believed that, for the purposes of lasting peace, security and stability in the South Caucasus, there was no alternative to concerted efforts by the international community to convince the Republic of Armenia to put an end to the illegal occupation of the territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan and to ensure the inalienable right of Azerbaijani IDPs to return to their place of origin.

73. **Ms. Abgarian** (Observer for Armenia) said that her delegation regretted that the Azerbaijani delegation had raised a polemic. That was the politicization she had mentioned in her statement. She hoped that the responsibility associated with membership of the Executive Committee would force Azerbaijan to avoid such politicization in the future.

74. Half the statement made by the delegation of Azerbaijan had concerned Armenia and, like the statement made in exercise of the right of reply, had contained baseless and false accusations against her country.

75. The problem of refugees was common to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh. The refugee problem in those three countries had been caused by the war started by Azerbaijan. The most important message in the statement of the Armenian delegation had been that, in order not to create new refugee populations, Armenian or Azerbaijani, it was necessary to avoid war. By presenting Armenia and Armenians as enemies, Azerbaijan was exacerbating the situation, undermining the negotiation process and making the return of the refugees impossible. Like the High Commissioner, Armenia hoped that Azerbaijan would leave the issue of Nagorny Karabakh and all its political aspects to the relevant bodies and in future not abuse its position as a member of the Executive Committee. There was no international document naming Armenia as an aggressor State or indicating that Armenia was occupying any territory. The only reference was to the Armenian forces of Nagorny Karabakh, and thus if there was anything to be discussed, it ought to be discussed with Nagorny Karabakh.

76. **Mr. Shirinov** (Azerbaijan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said he wished to remind the representative of Armenia of the forced expulsion of some 250,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis from their place of permanent residence in Armenia at the end of the 1980s. Those persons had all been granted Azerbaijani citizenship. The relevant documents included four Security Council resolutions, resolution 1416 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a resolution entitled "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, and a European Parliament resolution of 2010 on the need for a European Union strategy for the South Caucasus. The texts recognized the occupation of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and its surrounding districts and demanded the withdrawal of all Armenian forces. They unequivocally referred to the Republic of Armenia as an occupying Power. His delegation recommended that the Armenian representative, instead of making unconvincing remarks in her statement, should advise her Government to start implementing the provisions of the documents mentioned in order to deal with the root cause of the existence of more than 1 million refugees and IDPs in Azerbaijan.

77. **Ms. Abgarian** (Observer for Armenia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the accusations made by Azerbaijan did not reflect reality. All the documents

mentioned by Azerbaijan referred to the Armenian Forces of Nagorno Karabakh, but not to Armenia. The refugees that had fled from Armenia had voluntarily decided to leave Armenia after the pogroms of the Armenian population. Most of them had managed to sell their homes and property and others had received compensation from the Armenian Government. Any issue regarding Nagorno Karabakh should be discussed with the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.