



General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 November 2021

Original: English

Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Seventy-second session

Summary record of the 745th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 8 October 2021, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Figueiroa..... (Brazil)

Contents

Adoption of the report of the seventy-second session of the Executive Committee

Closing of the session (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



In the absence of Ms. Farani Azevêdo (Brazil), Mr. Figueiroa (Brazil) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the report of the seventy-second session of the Executive Committee

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

1. **Mr. Schotten** (Rapporteur), introducing the draft report of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme on its seventy-second session (4–8 October 2021), said that the report was procedural in nature. Sections I and II provided an overview of the session during the previous four days. Section I contained a paragraph on the election of officers for the seventy-third session. Section III would contain the conclusion on international protection and durable solutions in the context of a public health emergency if, under the silence procedure, member States reached an agreement on the conclusion, which was currently being circulated. The section also included decisions that had been adopted on the following: administrative, financial and programme matters; the proposal to request approval from the General Assembly for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to develop its own financial regulations; the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2022; observer participation in the meetings of the Standing Committee in 2021–2022; the provisional agenda of the seventy-third session of the Executive Committee; and the participation of intergovernmental organizations in private meetings of the Executive Committee.

2. **Monsignor Putzer** (Holy See) said that he wished to provide an explanation of the position of the Holy See on the draft conclusion of the Executive Committee on international protection and durable solutions in the context of a public health emergency. The Holy See acknowledged that the adoption of the conclusion should be a sign of the political will of member States to offer concrete aid and protection to refugees, asylum seekers and other people of concern to UNHCR.

3. It was regrettable that the pandemic had become a crisis of protection as well as another cause, and sometimes an excuse, for the delay in the achievement of durable solutions. In some cases, Member States had even used the crisis to burden host communities through an unsustainable strategy of externalization, avoiding direct responsibility for large, mixed flows of migrants and refugees through agreements that stopped them, often indefinitely, at strategic points along their journey.

4. The Holy See wished to express its deep concern that the pandemic had also challenged fundamental rules of refugee law by Member States, including with respect to the right to seek asylum and the cardinal principle of non-refoulement. Sadly, amid the tragedy of forced displacement, in certain regions, solidarity was clearly in short supply. The Holy See emphasized the need to protect the right to health of everyone, including refugees and migrants, and especially of women and children, who were at particular risk in humanitarian situations.

5. It was striking that, while certain States members of the Executive Committee disagreed about ensuring that right, and specifically to guaranteeing access to basic health care for refugees, those same States went out of their way to promote access to abortion, under the guise of a "health-care service". Health care must be ensured through non-discriminatory, comprehensive laws and policies that were centred on the good of every human person and founded on the right to life for all, from conception to natural death. Moreover, any definition of health care that sought to include abortion did not share international consensus, violated human dignity and ignored the religious beliefs of many.

6. The Holy See thus wished to make the following reservations with respect to concepts advanced in the conclusion of the Executive Committee, including the terms "sexual and reproductive health" and "sexual and reproductive health services". As it considered those terms to apply to a holistic concept of health, it did not regard abortion, access to abortion or access to abortifacients as a dimension of those terms. Furthermore, the inclusion of such language should not set a precedent for negotiating such conclusions in the future.

7. The Holy See, one of the founding members of the Executive Committee, had decided not to block consensus on the conclusion for the sake of preserving dialogue and affirming

the positive elements contained therein. For that same reason, his delegation was very concerned that others had refused to show any flexibility in considering the various proposals made in good faith by his delegation and the Rapporteur.

8. The fact that certain member States had used such a “take it or leave it” approach to language that did not share international consensus ultimately hindered multilateralism and undermined the legitimacy the Executive Committee, the unity of its membership and its significant work for the sake of refugees everywhere.

9. **Ms. Szúcs** (Hungary) said that her delegation had actively engaged in the negotiations on the draft conclusion of the Executive Committee on international protection and durable solutions in the context of a public health emergency. Hungary acknowledged with appreciation the contributions of host States in providing international protection to large numbers of refugees. However, her Government did not endorse the global compact on refugees, nor did it participate in its implementation in any form. Therefore, it considered that the compact had no relevance or any added value for addressing the issue. It did not share the view that resettlement of refugees was an adequate solution. However, it respected the views of other States that were willing to take part in that risky endeavour. Hungary had joined the consensus but dissociated itself from the paragraphs on the global compact on refugees and on resettlement, which were not applicable to it.

10. **Mr. Ali Abadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Executive Committee had failed yet again to take note in its report of the bitter fact that unilateral coercive measures were badly affecting the host communities’ capacity to protect and were bringing the humanitarian space to the verge of serious breakdown. The United States must be held to account. He trusted that, sooner or later, it would be held accountable for the terrible consequences of its unilateral coercive measures across the globe. Those who were complicit in such atrocities were equally responsible for the severe repercussions of the malign policies and actions of the United States. He wondered whether members were to be commended for having agreed on the report to be adopted or embarrassed at the big hole that would be left in the conclusions. The intransigent approach of the United States, supported by those who were complicit in its crimes against humanity due to unjust and unlawful unilateral coercive measures, did not relieve the international community of its human, moral and legal obligations to continue to voice loud and clear the grave injustice that was being done to its people and all others affected in one form or another by unilateral sanctions.

11. **Ms. Moussa** (Egypt), speaking via video link, said that, while her Government valued the fact that consensus was being reached on the conclusion, it was concerned about the way in which the process had taken place during the previous few hours. It considered that the process had involved the sharing of language and text that had been changed in an inconsistent manner, which was something that should be borne in mind in the future. That being said, her delegation was glad to go along with the consensus.

12. Her delegation had delivered a statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States. She wondered how its request for its position to be included in the report would be reflected.

13. **Mr. Damiani Pellegrini** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, while his delegation welcomed the Rapporteur’s efforts to produce a consensus document, it rejected the one-sided proposal on such a sensitive issue for his delegation as unilateral coercive measures, which constituted a crime against humanity. It was essential to seek compromise among delegations. His delegation had not been consulted on the proposal that had been presented. It rejected the position that unilateral coercive measures had no humanitarian impact. Countries were called upon to lift such measures in order to promote the rule of law and protect the human rights of innocent populations. The measures affected countries’ capacities to protect refugees and carry out humanitarian action, particularly in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Fair and timely access to vaccines was vital for the protection of refugee populations and host communities against the spread of the virus. There was a need for greater international cooperation and respect for international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He hoped that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would be able to visit the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and see on the ground the effects of unilateral coercive measures.

14. **Ms. Hansen** (Secretary of the Executive Committee), referring the question raised by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the draft report was procedural in nature. However, the Executive Committee had to take into consideration the requests to have the positions of delegations reflected in the official records of the meeting. She wished to draw the delegation's attention to paragraph 11 of the draft report, which made reference to the comprehensive summary records of each meeting, which would be made available on the UNHCR website on the page relating to the seventy-second session of the Executive Committee.

15. **The Chair** said that he took it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the report of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme on its seventy-second session. In line with the comments made by the Rapporteur and following the expiry of the silence procedure, the secretariat would insert the conclusion on international protection and durable solutions in the context of a public health emergency into the draft report. If no consensus was reached, the report would be finalized without the conclusion and include only the six decisions, as adopted.

16. *The report of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme on its seventy-second session was adopted on that understanding.*

Closing of the session (continued)

17. After an exchange of courtesies, **the Chair** declared closed the seventy-second session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.