



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
30 October 2017  
English  
Original: French

---

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

### Summary record of the 707th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 5 October 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. McCarney..... (Canada)

## Contents

General debate (*continued*)

Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee:

(a) International protection

---

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 document 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.

GE.17-17707 (E) 261017 301017



\* 1 7 1 7 7 0 7 \*

Please recycle



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

**General debate** (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Mcharek Hadiji** (Tunisia) said that Tunisia associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the African Group. Noting with regret that the number of refugees in the world had increased by a million since 2016, she reiterated the importance that Tunisia attached to solidarity between countries and responsibility sharing at the international level. She welcomed the fact that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) explored new financing modalities and commended the UNHCR Country Office in Tunisia for its work, in particular the formulation of an emergency plan in the event of a new mass influx of refugees. In cooperation with UNHCR, Tunisia had developed draft legislation on asylum, which was currently being reviewed.

2. **Mr. Al Amri** (Observer for Oman), speaking with reference to the statement made by the representative of Burundi regarding persons claiming to be of Omani nationality without supporting evidence, who were allegedly at risk of becoming stateless, said that a task force had been sent to Burundi and, according to official Omani registers, the persons concerned were not Omani. The Government of Burundi had subsequently announced that it would review those cases in order to find a solution.

3. **Ms. Samate-Cessouma** (Observer for the African Union), after associating the African Union with the statement made on behalf of the African Group, paid a warm tribute to humanitarian workers. While noting that the living and reception conditions for refugees were improving in some countries that had adopted integration policies for refugees, such as the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, she said that the considerable reduction in the funding allocated to forced displacement was a cause for concern. The African Union Commission would convene a donor conference before the end of 2017 in order to mobilize the necessary resources to meet humanitarian needs in Africa.

4. The African Union, which had adopted a humanitarian policy framework, would continue its consideration of the global compact on refugees at a humanitarian symposium to be held in Kenya in November 2017. In addition, the African Union Heads of State and Government had decided to establish an African humanitarian agency. A draft protocol additional to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the specific aspects of the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness was currently under consideration.

5. **Mr. Kammer** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that the Order provided assistance to refugees, displaced persons and migrants in some 30 countries and the southern Mediterranean. The Order continued its humanitarian diplomacy efforts, in particular in the framework of the implementation of the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit. In addition to the meetings that it had organized to promote political and national reconciliation and to consider the situation of refugees, the Order focused on the areas of health and education. Malteser International, the worldwide relief agency of the Order, implemented successful cash assistance and cash-for-work programmes in places such as Iraq and Haiti, which served to empower the beneficiaries.

6. **Ms. Helke** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration(IOM)) said that the partnership between IOM and UNHCR dated back to 1951, when IOM was established, and currently revolved around achieving the dual aims of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, namely to work towards a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and a global compact on refugees. At a time when migratory flows were increasingly mixed, it was important to remember the shared humanity of migrants and refugees; cooperation between IOM and UNHCR and their partners must be strengthened in order to restore public confidence in the dynamism, diversity and richness that migrants and refugees brought to societies.

7. **Mr. Tessem** (Observer for the International Labour Office) said that the participation of representatives of the world of work in the design, planning and implementation of operations launched and the follow-up to such operations was vital. The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNHCR signed in 2016 would help bridge the divide between

humanitarian and development aid. Strengthening the labour-market integration of refugees could be highly effective in eliminating exploitative labour practices and fostering social cohesion and stability.

8. In November 2016, the ILO Governing Body had adopted the Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market. In June 2017, the International Labour Conference had adopted the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), which addressed the issue of refugees' access to employment and livelihoods. In addition, ILO and UNHCR cooperated within the framework of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, in particular youth in fragile situations.

9. **Mr. Khan** (Observer for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, according to UNICEF estimates, there were more than 50 million displaced children in the world, of whom 28 million had fled violence, conflict and persecution. One in every two refugees was a child. An alarming number of children were moving alone: in the Americas, more than 100,000 unaccompanied minors had been apprehended at the Mexico-United States border between 2015 and 2017, while, in Africa, the violence perpetrated by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin had left 1.4 million children displaced and at least a million trapped in areas that were hard to reach. In the Horn of Africa, more than 90,000 unaccompanied and separated children had been displaced in 2015.

10. Whatever the drivers of child displacement, children were very seldom able to gain access to protection or to move legally. Some particularly vulnerable children were refugees throughout their childhood. UNICEF was committed to ensuring that all children were protected; that every refugee child could go to school (currently, only half did so); that no child was left stateless; and that no children were detained or discriminated against on account of who they were or where they came from. It had launched the "Children Uprooted" campaign to support an agenda for action focused on six priority areas: protection; alternatives to detention; family unity; access to services; addressing the drivers of child migration; and combating xenophobia and discrimination.

11. **Ms. Silva** (Observer for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that a joint process to strengthen bilateral collaboration between UNDP and UNHCR had been launched in order to respond to displacement crises in a more effective and coordinated fashion. The UNDP Strategic Plan, which was currently under consideration by Member States, placed United Nations inter-agency cooperation at the core of all UNDP activities. UNDP supported Member States that had commenced roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, such as Djibouti, Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania, and worked with country offices and United Nations resident coordinators in order to provide better responses to the challenges of displacement.

12. **Ms. Jerger** (Observer for the World Food Programme (WFP)) said that, as at the end of 2016, WFP had supported 6.4 million refugees in 33 countries, in some cases helping them with the process of reintegration into their home communities. In order to deepen their partnership, in May 2017 WFP and UNHCR had concluded an addendum on cash assistance for refugees to their existing Memorandum of Understanding. The new UNHCR-WFP joint strategy on enhancing self-reliance in food security and nutrition was one example of the two agencies' strong collaboration on reducing dependence on humanitarian aid, in particular through multi-year time frames.

13. **Mr. Helle** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that it was important to remember that most refugee situations in the world were caused by armed conflicts and that only greater efforts to prevent or resolve them and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law could gradually reduce forced displacement. Since many armed conflicts, and consequently refugee situations, were protracted, ICRC welcomed the longer-term perspectives promoted by the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which supported host communities and countries that had often limited resources. As for the elaboration of the two global compacts, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants recognized that refugees and vulnerable migrants had certain humanitarian needs in common. ICRC called on States to ensure that both compacts addressed the issues of family separation, unaccompanied children, missing persons,

alternatives to immigration detention and the use of force only as a last resort. ICRC called on States to ensure complementarity between the two compacts so that all aspects of protection were taken into account, notably the principle of non-refoulement for migrants who might not qualify as refugees.

14. **Ms. Baghli** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation(OIC)) said that OIC member States were experiencing acute crises that generated large-scale refugee flows to other OIC countries. Many of the host countries displayed a great sense of solidarity, despite their scarce resources. OIC countries were greatly concerned at the crisis unfolding in Rakhine State in Myanmar, which had caused the forced displacement of thousands of people. The crisis had arisen from the denial of nationality to the Rohingya Muslim community by the Government of Myanmar, from multiple restrictions imposed on Rohingyas, including freedom of movement, and from a policy of systematic discrimination. The Myanmar authorities must take urgent measures to stop the violence. OIC thanked the Government of Bangladesh for its open-door policy and the assistance that it gave to Rohingya refugees.

15. **Mr. Lewis** (Observer for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR))said that refugees were not merely people in need of protection but people with human rights entitled to protection by the international human rights framework, which provided practical answers to various aspects of their situation. OHCHR therefore welcomed the work of UNHCR on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and a human rights-based programme of action as part of the global compact on refugees. OHCHR was committed to continuing to monitor, investigate, analyse and report on human rights violations through its field presence, and to supporting United Nations mandated commissions of inquiry and other mechanisms with a view to contributing to accountability and enhancing the protection afforded by international human rights law. It would also develop an analysis of issues that cut across the two compacts, in order to ensure their complementarity in the treatment of such important issues as child protection, immigration detention and confronting xenophobia and racism. OHCHR was particularly concerned about the protection gaps faced by people on the move who did not benefit from the protection afforded by refugee status.

16. **Mr. Elie** (Observer for the International Council of Voluntary Agencies), speaking on behalf of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), said that NGOs were eager to go beyond “business as usual” and to participate actively in the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework at the national and regional levels. They had already been involved in various regional processes and wished for further clarity on the structures being developed to apply to the Framework at all levels. NGOs wished to develop more efficient communication with all civil society actors, building on the outcome of the 2017 UNHCR-NGO Partnership Survey. They welcomed the efforts by UNHCR to increase refugees’ inclusion in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and global compact processes. With regard to responsibility-sharing, NGOs called on UNHCR to formulate in the programme of action a vision, accompanied by a road map, that defined the measures necessary to achieve progress in that area. Responsibility sharing should go beyond financial support and include resettlement and complementary pathways. Developed countries should not restrict themselves simply to being donors and, in that connection, NGOs called on the Government of the United States of America to reconsider its decision to set the annual refugee admission ceiling at 45,000.

17. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed the activities of the various organizations and their support for the work of UNHCR. He wished to thank the African Union, in particular, for its humanitarian commitment and ongoing support in the development of a global compact on refugees. UNHCR shared the view of those speakers who had stressed the need to close the financing gap between operations in Africa and those implemented in other regions. Noting that many of the refugee crises affected OIC member States, he emphasized the need to recover the spirit of the International Conference on Migration and Statelessness in Ashgabat. He shared the view expressed by the representative of IOM regarding the importance of remembering that both compacts were derived from the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants; it was important to underscore the commonalities between refugees and migrants in their

implementation. Like ICRC and others, he was of the view that the compacts must incorporate issues of protection. He called on all organizations to cooperate creatively with civil society and local NGOs in order to provide the best possible response to the problems faced by refugees.

18. **The Chair**, summing up, said that speakers had called for a greater sharing of responsibility and an increased emphasis on solutions and innovative initiatives in order to prevent and respond to crises. More than 820 participants had registered for the 2017 session of the Executive Committee and a record number of statements had been made during the general debate.

19. In addition to persecution and conflict, delegations had identified underdevelopment, poverty, climate change, environmental degradation, epidemics and exclusion as drivers of displacement. The situation in Bangladesh had been at the heart of the debate, but speakers had highlighted the fact that smaller-scale crises must not be disregarded. With regard to protection, several delegations had called for a more equitable implementation of the international refugee protection regime and a new way of working. The #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, launched by UNHCR, had attracted broad support, since the denial of nationality seriously undermined the enjoyment of other human rights and was a driver of displacement. Speakers had also called for efforts to be made for the protection of displaced persons, who could be tomorrow's refugees. Voluntary repatriation had been identified as the best solution for refugees, taking into due consideration the capacities of countries of origin. Pending lasting solutions, host countries had been encouraged to explore complementary avenues for admission, to include refugees in national health and education systems and to foster their self-reliance.

20. Delegations had reiterated their support for the 11 countries applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the regional approaches pursued in Africa and Central America. They had appealed for refugees to be considered central to the Framework, which should be applied in such a way as to empower persons with specific needs. They had also emphasized the need for concrete action, along with increased and more predictable funding.

21. A global compact on refugees had never been as necessary as it was now. Delegations had undertaken to participate constructively in the thematic discussions, the stocktaking process and the formal consultations that would lead to the development of the compact. They had requested that protection should be at the core of the compact and emphasized the political will that was required to achieve its purpose. While States and other partners had responded to recent humanitarian appeals, delegations had nonetheless highlighted the negative impact of funding gaps and inequalities, particularly with regard to operations in Africa. In line with commitments under the Grand Bargain on financing humanitarian action, delegations had advocated that States should provide more multi-year, predictable funding.

22. There was no country or region that could address the current global forced displacement crisis on its own; the international community needed to work together, with refugees at the heart of its response. The world was at a crossroads: it must turn the commitments made in the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants into a reality. It must seize the opportunity to transform its response to large movements of refugees by finding the necessary political will and translating expressions of solidarity into practical policies and mechanisms to help those displaced and their host communities.

*Statements in exercise of the right of reply*

23. **Mr. Sergeev** (Russian Federation) said that the politicized statements by the delegations of Ukraine and Georgia contributed nothing to the work of the Executive Committee. They had made false accusations against the Russian Federation, blaming it for their own failure not to have taken the necessary measures to remedy the situation. He recalled that South Ossetia and Abkhazia were independent States and that it was the aggressive policies of Georgia that had led to the original occurrence of forced displacement in the region. Georgia did not provide for the needs of the populations that had been forcibly displaced and refused to conclude agreements with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, even though that would make it possible to reach a settlement, particularly on the

humanitarian front. As for Ukraine, the mass displacement had arisen, above all, as a result of the crimes committed by the Ukrainian authorities and the ultranationalists in the south-east of the country. There were no Russian troops in Donetsk or Luhansk. Ukraine made false statements with a view to justifying its disastrous policies. The Russian Federation had taken in more than a million Ukrainians and contributed regularly to the funding of UNHCR operations in Ukraine. It also provided the inhabitants of the south-east of the country with humanitarian assistance. From an international point of view, it was entirely legitimate that the Republic of Crimea formed part of the Russian Federation. Requests to visit Crimea were under consideration by the Moscow Country Office of UNHCR and the Russian authorities. The Russian Federation invited Ukraine to focus on resolving the country's humanitarian crisis.

24. **Mr. Pérez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that there were currently about 150,000 Peruvians in the territory of his country and that the former president, Hugo Chávez, had regularized the situation of a large number of them. Under the current President, Nicolás Maduro Moros, they were provided with various forms of social assistance and enjoyed the same rights as Venezuelans. In 2016, the then President of the United States of America, Barrack Hussein Obama, had declared the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela an “unusual and extraordinary threat”. In 2017, Donald Trump, the current President of the United States, had increased sanctions against the country with a view to an unconstitutional change of government. The economic situation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had deteriorated as a result, despite the Government's best efforts to provide the people with basic services and invest in the sectors that had most need of them. In any event, it could not be claimed that the rise in migratory flows was the result of a humanitarian crisis. The Venezuelan Government thanked the countries that hosted Venezuelans for the assistance that they provided to its nationals and hoped that the country's situation would improve.

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

#### **(a) International protection**

25. **Mr. Türk** (Assistant High Commissioner for Protection) said that several countries had moved away from the principle of international protection. However, to provide sanctuary to people who fled for their lives and their freedom was not only noble but also eminently practical, a fact that often got forgotten by the media and politicians. In 2016, flagrant violations of refugees' rights had been committed throughout the world. Refugees had been killed and entire groups of refugees had been pushed back across borders when they sought to flee their country in order to survive. The lack of respect for the principle of non-refoulement was particularly disturbing. Granting asylum and protecting refugees did not constitute political acts based on a judgment about conditions in the country of origin but humanitarian acts in response to the suffering and the needs of those concerned. Yet some in leadership positions had cast aside that rule in favour of short-term political gain, arguing that they acted in defence of the liberty, security and safety of their citizens. That position was dangerous not just for refugees but also for the citizens in whose defence they purported to act. It should also be noted that the work of some NGOs, humanitarian actors and national human rights institutions had been curtailed.

26. Policies of deterrence also constituted an enormous problem, since, in some instances, they involved cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. There was no justification for keeping families apart or holding refugees in detention sites offshore or in border areas. In a number of countries, asylum seekers and refugees continued to be placed in detention, which had a profoundly negative impact on their physical and mental well-being. Other solutions were possible: UNHCR, was vigorously pursuing its “Global Strategy: Beyond Detention 2014-2019”. Fortunately, in some countries — Thailand, Malaysia and the United Kingdom, for example — the number of children detained was decreasing.

27. The protection of the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence remained a prime concern for UNHCR. Such violence took many forms, ranging from rape and domestic violence to sexual exploitation and child marriage, but in every case it humiliated and disempowered the victims. Although UNHCR had made good progress through its

“Safe from the Start” initiative, challenges remained. To address them, UNHCR was developing a three-year plan of action to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence across all programmes and sectors.

28. Many countries had encountered major problems owing to the rise in the number of displaced children. Such challenges could, however, be turned into opportunities. In 2016, the State Secretary to the Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality of Sweden had told the Executive Committee that his country’s work on caring for refugee children had resulted in the strengthening of the national child protection system.

29. Many countries also faced difficulties with regard to their asylum systems and the refugee status determination process. Such difficulties were due to the high numbers of refugees or people seeking asylum in cases where no other legal pathway was available. In 2016, UNHCR had received almost 200 refugee status determination requests in more than 60 countries. States should invest in first- and second-instance decision-making bodies in order to ensure that their refugee status determination procedures were simple, fair and efficient. Countries such as Turkey, Thailand, Cameroon and Morocco were already taking such action.

30. Good governance was also at stake. It was clear that the current debate and polemics about refugees could undermine good governance. Refugees were often vilified. At times, they were even branded terrorists or criminals. Worse still, they were blamed for their plight. In pre-election periods, migration and refugee issues had served as a way to channel anger and frustration, which was detrimental to good governance. The humanitarian community should take a closer look at itself, since it tended to preach to the converted. It should engage those who did not agree with it, beginning with a listening exercise to understand their fears. It should also seek to replace such fears with empathy and the desire for inclusion.

31. The inclusion of refugees in society was supported by many sectors, such as universities, sports federations, faith groups, trade unions, young people and the private sector. Thousands of community initiatives had been launched by towns seeking to revitalize their workforce. The World Bank had decided to allocate substantial resources to host countries with limited resources that were particularly affected.

32. Terminology was also important, since it was often used in a muddled way at the expense of refugees. For example, they were sometimes called “undocumented people” or “vulnerable migrants”, but such language created confusion and provided fodder for those wishing to undermine refugees’ rights. Refugees were individuals who happened to be refugees; they were not a subset of migrants. The essence of international protection lay in recognizing the international protection needs of people fleeing conflict, violence, human rights abuses and other serious predicaments in their country of origin. There was also a clear human rights basis for migrants’ rights, even though there was no internationally agreed definition of the term “migrant”. Blurring the distinction between migrants and refugees undermined the specific legal protection to which refugees were entitled. Moreover, there was sometimes an unwarranted juxtaposition between broader security concerns and the arrival of refugees. It should be recalled that refugees were often the first victims of terrorism and insecurity.

33. Security and protection should go hand in hand. International refugee law provided for safeguards to protect those in need of international protection, while bearing in mind the security interests of host countries and their communities. No system was entirely risk-free, but asylum procedures were among the most carefully scrutinized channels for gaining admission and stay in a country. The same applied to resettlement, which, it should be recalled, functioned as a protection tool.

34. Ways should be found to break the cycle of displacement. That meant seeking more global solutions, including action to address root causes, meet immediate needs and ensure long-term development. The drivers of displacement had much to do with a lack of good governance, huge inequalities and the massive and unchecked exploitation of natural resources at the expense of local populations. Such issues were relevant to the international community as a whole. In different parts of the world, there were areas that had been neglected for decades and become breeding grounds for discontent, radicalization and

violence, which could lead to displacement. Displacement was a lifeline for survival but could lead to impoverishment. The reversal of the process could, however, be a catalyst for development and change, as provided for in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. There were situations in which refugees returned in circumstances that were less than ideal, which they had a perfect right to do. UNHCR had the responsibility to ensure that their decision to return was free and informed and that they had access to support upon arrival in their home country. There was a close relationship between external and internal displacement and UNHCR looked forward to the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), which would provide an opportunity to pursue the incorporation of those instruments into countries' legislation and policies.

35. Another tragic consequence of the lack of good governance was statelessness, as was shown by the violence and serious violations that had led more than 500,000 Rohingya to seek refuge in Bangladesh. Some progress had been made in that regard, however, in that, since 2015, more than 100,000 stateless persons had obtained a nationality. Thailand had undertaken to eliminate statelessness completely by 2024. Kenya, Madagascar and Sierra Leone had also made efforts in that direction. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was the first region to have adopted a binding plan of action to tackle statelessness. Moreover, UNHCR had established partnerships with NGOs, UNICEF and the World Bank, with a view to implementing target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which provided for legal identity for all.

36. Work on the global compact on refugees in 2018 would help generate interest in the issue of refugees. The compact should be a consensual document, drawn up by the international community as a whole, in the framework of consultations to be held in the first half of 2018. The aim was that the final text of the instrument should be approved by every country with a view to taking it on board and observing it scrupulously.

37. **Ms. Nordlund** (Sweden) said that her country had received more than 160,000 asylum seekers in 2015. In 2016, 71,500 had been granted residence permits and some 40,000 residence permits had been issued to family members of persons already residing in Sweden.

38. At the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in September 2016, Sweden had pledged to expand its national resettlement programme from 3,400 quota places in 2017 to 5,000 before the end of 2018. Sweden also continued to play an active role in the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Support Mechanism and the European Union Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge (EU-FRANK).

39. Sweden had ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and introduced amendments to the Swedish Citizenship Act that had come into force in 2015 with a view to making it easier for stateless children and young people to acquire Swedish nationality.

40. **Mr. Valentine** (Canada) said that, in accordance with the commitments made in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Canada stood ready to support countries wishing to implement sponsorship and refugee integration programmes and to adopt an approach involving the whole of society.

41. Canada had resettled more than 46,000 refugees in 2016. Its planned admission of 25,000 resettled refugees in 2017 would more than double its target for 2015. Canada was deeply concerned about the protection needs of the Rohingya refugees fleeing the violence in Myanmar. In recognition of the significant humanitarian needs arising from the crisis, the Government had announced an additional CAN\$ 3 million in funding to its humanitarian partners, including CAN\$ 500,000 to UNHCR.

42. **Ms. Rosenvinge** (Norway) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement by Australia on behalf of the Group of Friends of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024 and noted that the rights of stateless children born in Norway had been strengthened.

43. By the end of 2017, Norway would have met the target of resettling 8,000 Syrian refugees over the period 2015 to 2017. Moreover, it had fulfilled its commitment to relocate 1,500 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece for 2016 and 2017. In order to have well-functioning asylum systems, however, there was also a need for well-functioning systems for the return of persons not in need of international protection.

44. Her delegation was particularly concerned about the protection of children and the response to sexual and gender-based violence. It was therefore essential that the relevant UNHCR strategies be put in place. In particular, UNHCR should ensure that one of the overall objectives of Humanitarian Response Plans was to protect the persons affected.

45. **Ms. Sato** (Japan) said that her country welcomed the measures taken by UNHCR, particularly those that addressed the specific needs of children and young people. As part of the commitment by the Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, at the seventy-first General Assembly, 28 Syrian students had arrived in Japan and started their courses of study at university. Under the programme, students could also bring their families.

46. Another scholarship programme, the Refugee Higher Education Programme, which had been launched in 2007 with cooperation from UNHCR, was currently operational in eight universities. As of September 2017, 44 students had benefited from the programme, which provided a free education.

47. Japan had been the first country in Asia to introduce a resettlement programme. Starting as a pilot project in 2010 for Myanmar refugees living in Thailand, it had become a full programme in 2015, resettling refugees from Myanmar living in Malaysia and the families of refugees from Thailand already resettled in Japan. A total of 152 refugees had been resettled in Japan since 2010.

48. **Mr. Fakher** (Yemen) said that further action should be taken at the national, regional and international level to deal with the trafficking and smuggling of persons, along with other human rights abuses, in view of the fact that migrants and refugees were particularly vulnerable in that regard.

49. Yemen wished to commend UNHCR for its cash-based intervention over the past years and hoped that UNHCR could extend the programme. Cash-based programming was an efficient tool of humanitarian assistance that also protected the human dignity of its beneficiaries.

50. **Mr. Kühle** (Germany) said that it was of paramount importance that adequate protection was provided to all persons in humanitarian need, regardless of their legal or civil status, their age, their sex or their disability. At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, Germany had undertaken to restrict its funding to projects that included a gender analysis, with sex- and age-disaggregated data. It had also endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and was committed to its implementation.

51. Germany was committed to providing refugees with access to psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive health services. In that connection, it appreciated the efforts of UNHCR to update the Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings.

52. Lastly, he said that Germany would be a joint organizer of the tripartite annual consultations on resettlement in 2018.

53. **Ms. Pollack** (United States of America) said that she commended Member States and other parties for their commitments under the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. A major focus of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the conversations on developing the global compact on refugees was the question of how to strengthen refugees' ability to provide for themselves and their families. Ultimately, greater self-reliance led to greater self-protection and dignity.

54. The United States remained committed to helping States build their capacity to identify and process asylum requests as the first step in any humanitarian response, as it had done with Mexico and other States.

55. **Mr. Winder** (United Kingdom) said that it was not clear how the commitment contained in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants that all refugee and migrant children “are receiving education within a few months of arrival” would be met. That should be a priority consideration in 2018.

56. The United Kingdom applauded UNHCR for working with ILO on the promotion of employment opportunities for refugees. Self-reliance and inclusion would remain key objectives in the current situation. The United Kingdom reiterated its support for UNHCR and stood ready to work with it in the countries that they jointly assisted and at headquarters to ensure that refugees were provided with the solutions that they often desperately hoped for.

57. **Mr. Rattanasenee** (Thailand) said that his delegation firmly believed that granting legal status was an effective way of reducing statelessness. The Government had thus approved two resolutions: the first granted foreign children born in Thailand the right to stay in Thailand legally and the second prescribed the legal pathway for such children to apply for Thai nationality. About 110,000 children could benefit from the implementation of the two resolutions.

58. With support from UNHCR, IOM and other organizations, Thailand and Myanmar were working together closely to prepare for the second round of voluntary returns, after the successful voluntary return of 71 Myanmar displaced persons in 2016.

59. The Thai Government had done significant work on strengthening multisectoral cooperation in order to address the needs of displaced persons residing in nine temporary shelters in Thailand along the Thai-Myanmar border.

60. **Ms. Bors Boom** (Australia) said that, in the Asia-Pacific region, vulnerability as a result of climate change and environmental degradation remained an issue of high priority. As a member of the Steering Group of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, her delegation would work with UNHCR in addressing some of the protection gaps in cross-border disaster-related displacement.

61. With 1.7 million stateless people in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia strongly supported the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024 and urged UNHCR and other stakeholders to integrate statelessness into the global compact on refugees, the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the programme of action. She added that Australia would contribute an extra \$A 20 million in response to the humanitarian needs in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*