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Provisional

President: Mr. Heusgen (Germany)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Dominican Republic	Mr. Trullols Yarba
Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
France	Mr. Delattre
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Mr. Lewicki
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Grandi.

Mr. Grandi: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me today and for representing a country that has been and is one of the strongest supporters of the refugee cause in your country itself, in Europe and globally.

From where I sit, and no doubt from where members of the Security Council sit as well, times are very challenging. I will focus on those challenges seen from my perspective. I would like to flag, at the beginning, a context in which there is unprecedented stigmatization of refugees and migrants, a context in which traditional responses to refugee crises appear increasingly inadequate and a context in which there is a sense around the issue of an overwhelming crisis.

I think it would be useful, before we start, to recall for whom this is a crisis. It is a crisis for a mother who is trying to flee gang violence with her children. It is a crisis for a teenager who wants to flee war, human rights violations and forced conscription. It is a crisis for Governments in countries with few resources that open their borders to thousands of refugees every day. For them, it is a crisis.

But to portray this as a global crisis that is not manageable, in my opinion, is wrong. With political will, which Council members represent at the highest level, and with improved responses, as enshrined in the global compact on refugees, which was adopted in December by the General Assembly as resolution 73/151, it is possible and urgent to address those crises.

The Security Council has a critical role to play, as I have said in the past. I will quickly focus on three areas: first, a key function of the Security Council — solving peace and security crises; secondly, supporting the

countries that host the largest numbers of refugees; and thirdly, working together to remove obstacles to solutions, in particular the return of people to their own countries.

First, with regard to working together to solve crises, I will focus on the situation in Libya. However, before I go there, let me recall that, of the nearly 70 million people who are displaced or refugees, most are fleeing conflict. If conflicts were prevented or resolved, most refugee flows would disappear. Still, from where we are we observe very fragmented approaches to peacemaking and very insufficient approaches to peacebuilding. We see a lot of efforts to address the symptoms without addressing the causes.

Libya is a case in point and I know very well that it is an issue on the Council's current agenda, given the events of the past few days. Let me talk about Libya from our perspective. As members know, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), we are working not only with internally displaced Libyans, but also refugees and migrants who are stranded there. Many of them fled other conflicts and now find themselves caught in another conflict.

Security has always been very fragile in Libya. Now and over the past week, that security and those conditions are reaching a breaking point. We have reduced staff, like the rest of the United Nations. We do not want to leave, if it is possible to stay, but work is very difficult and dangerous. I visited twice and I have hardly ever felt such a sense of insecurity. We tried to gain access, even under the current circumstances, to the detention centre where refugees and migrants are held. We have been able to relocate 150 yesterday or this morning to safety, but that is a drop in the bucket.

Libya is indicative of the challenges that we face in many conflicts, for example in Yemen, which the Council discusses so frequently. There are insecurity and access issues faced by our personnel and relatively few resources. The most urgent need with regard to Libya is the Council's unified action to end the current military escalation and its strong call to spare civilians, including the refugees and migrants who are blocked in the country. I echo, in that regard, the appeal made yesterday by the Secretary-General. Then, if the Council is successful, there will finally need to be unified action to address the causes of conflict. It will be more difficult now, but it will be necessary if we want to avoid a protracted conflict, which no doubt

would create further displacement and impede any action on refugees and migrants, with consequences that are difficult to predict.

It is good to look at the lessons we have learned in Libya over the past few months. Lots of resources have been put into strengthening the coast guard to stem the flows towards Europe and not much else has been done by way of investment in bringing peace and stability to the country. That has not been effective. The Libyan coast guard is not an effective rescuer of people in the sea and the detention of refugees and migrants, under horrific and unacceptable conditions, is still the prevailing mode in the country.

I really think that it is important, and we have learned that lesson, to be more strategic at both ends of those long flows. We must look at the root causes and why people are leaving, such as conflict and poverty. In Europe, where people inevitably will continue to arrive, we must try to establish a reception system based on an approach of shared solidarity, in spite of the difficult politics around it.

My second point is about host countries. I know that political solutions are not easy in today's world, so we need to be realistic in our expectations. Forced displacement will continue to be with us for some time and we need to manage it well. Some countries have adopted very good approaches, in partnership with donors — some Council members are big donors — but also with development actors, such as the World Bank and the private sector. Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Niger: there are many very positive examples in Africa and there are other examples as well. However, more often than not, support is insufficient.

In that regard, I turn to the case of Venezuela. The Council has focused a great deal on what is happening inside Venezuela, and rightly so. I understand that, tomorrow, there will be a special meeting of the Security Council that will focus on that particular issue. In that respect, we are aligned with the rest of the United Nations. We must appeal, with the others, for a political solution to be found quickly to that crisis. But it is important not to forget — and sometimes I worry that the Council is forgetting — about the other dimension of that crisis: the outflow of people. Three and a half million Venezuelans have left the country. On refugees and migrants, IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) work together because it is a very mixed

group of people. Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil are the countries most impacted, but there are about 15 countries in all that are receiving Venezuelans.

Latin American solidarity, once again, has been outstanding. As we speak, countries of the region are concluding an important meeting in Quito, as part of the Quito process, to forge more regional cooperation to respond to the situation in Venezuela. I appeal to those countries to keep the doors open, in spite of the burden, and to diminish the restrictions imposed on Venezuelans.

Support for those countries needs to increase bilaterally through United Nations channels — our appeal for the humanitarian crisis in that region is one of the most poorly funded globally — and of course, most importantly, through the international financial institutions. Failure to do so will also leave those Governments exposed politically in their own countries and under the burden of an unsustainable mass of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans.

Eighty-five per cent of the world's refugees are in poor or middle-income countries. That is where the crisis is, including the situation in Venezuela. My appeal is therefore for support to be stepped up. That hospitality must not be taken for granted, as we see not only in Colombia or Peru, but also in Lebanon and Bangladesh. I could cite many other examples. The global compact provides a blueprint for better responses — a blueprint that is not only humanitarian but goes beyond to the medium and long terms. It is a type of response that is key not only from the humanitarian point of view, but also — and this is the Council's perspective — to the stability of the entire region, and hence directly of concern to the Council.

The third and last point I want to raise concerns the fact that solutions to forced displacement exist and are possible even in difficult circumstances, but we need to work together to remove obstacles, in particular those that prevent people from returning to their countries. In the context that I have described, we are increasingly challenged by one type of scenario, where peace is not completely established but where circumstances are evolving in that direction. That very often not only translates into pressure on refugees to return under less than ideal circumstances, but also leads to some refugees deciding, in spite of those circumstances, to do so.

Contrary to some perceptions, my organization does not block returns. We do not block returns. We think that return is a right, but it is equally a right to make the choice not to return if circumstances are not conducive to that, in the absence of security and basic support. In other words, we want to appeal once more for the free and informed choice of refugees to be respected and for returns to be — in a phrase that we use almost as a slogan — dignified, secure and safe. Key to that is work that we can do together to remove obstacles to return.

A case in point here is, of course, Syria. The vast majority of the almost 6 million Syrian refugees in the Middle East want to return. They tell us that in our surveys, but not all of them agree. The majority are still hesitant to do so now. It is important to look at this from the refugees' perspective. They have three sets of concerns: material concerns, such as shelter, services and jobs; security concerns, including conscription and retaliation in general; and legal and administrative obstacles related to property and documentation. On all these matters, we have established a fairly constructive dialogue with the Government of Syria, and I would like to thank the Russian Federation for having supported that dialogue.

But we need faster action and faster responses on the part of Syria, as well as access for UNHCR and United Nations staff to the areas where people return in order to create and build the confidence that they desperately need to make that very difficult choice. Meanwhile, I would be remiss if I failed to say that support for the countries hosting refugees — Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt and Iraq, which will host those refugees in large numbers for some time to come — needs to continue.

I want to also mention, as I have several times here in the Chamber, the situation in Myanmar. As Council members know, the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR have had a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Myanmar since June 2018. The implementation has been very slow and made slower by the security situation in northern Rakhine, with the offensive of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, with which Council members are familiar. We have received reports recently of violence against civilians, which has provoked fresh displacement, which is of course worrying.

I am glad to report, as I have not been able to do previously, that the Government of Myanmar

very recently authorized the implementation of 34 projects. That may seem like a lot, but they are very small compared to what needs to be done. We should be carrying out hundreds of projects. It is good to sustain that momentum. I hope to visit Myanmar soon to do just that. Inclusive development, encompassing the communities, is important, but as I have often said, it is not enough to break that cycle of exclusion, displacement and fragile return that has prevailed for decades. At the risk of sounding repetitive here, let me repeat nevertheless that returns must be voluntary. I think everybody agrees on that. Restoring security is key in that regard, as it is to implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, especially in terms of pathways to citizenship, documentation, access to services and ending the inequality before the law that has been characteristic of that situation and has affected the Rohingya community.

I think that it would be useful to continue to insist that some visible signals be given by the Government of Myanmar, including with respect to freedom of movement for the Rohingya who have not left and are still there; solving the problem of internally displaced persons who are confined to camps in very difficult circumstances; or tackling the hate-speech campaigns that we are seeing periodically in social media, directed at the Rohingya.

In the meantime, let us not forget that, similarly to the situation in Syria, Bangladesh is hosting a million people in difficult circumstances. I shall visit the country, along with representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and IOM, in a couple of weeks. That will be an opportunity for me to recall that we need international support in order to at least to give dignity to people who are living in difficult exile.

I shall close with a few remarks that take me back to my initial point. As Council members may know, I have been an international civil servant and I have worked with refugees for well over three decades. In my career in this field of work, I have seen much solidarity, and even heroism, in some of the responses that are provided on the ground, with the support of the Security Council. Make no mistake — I see that this solidarity is still very strong when I go around the world and talk about this issue, every day in many countries.

However, over the course of these three and a half decades, I have never seen such toxicity, such poison, in the language of politics, in the media, in social media and even in everyday discussions and conversations around this issue. This toxicity often focuses, sadly, tragically, on refugees, migrants and foreigners. That should be of concern to us all. What we have seen in Christchurch, New Zealand, is also the result of that toxic language of politics. But let us take a leaf from the exemplary response of the people and the leadership of New Zealand by responding to this toxic trend in a firm and organized manner, restating the values that underpin the solidarity provided to refugees, and reaffirming — as do the Sustainable Development Goals — that our societies will not be truly prosperous, stable and peaceful if they do not include all.

The President: I thank Mr. Grandi for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

I again encourage members to take the opportunity, now that the High Commissioner is here for the first time since the end of 2017, to ask questions on this issue and have him respond in a more interactive session.

The first speaker is the representative of Equatorial Guinea. As he is speaking on behalf of the group that comprises the African members of the Security Council, I think members will all agree that he deserves two turns of the hourglass.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council: Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa and Equatorial Guinea — a group that I have the honour to chair. I thank you, Sir, for allowing us to have two turns of the hourglass. I had hoped for three but two are enough.

We thank Germany for convening today's briefing on refugees, which we believe is very timely. We sincerely thank Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his detailed and comprehensive briefing on the plight of refugees throughout the world, which highlighted the worrisome statistics regarding the number of refugees in various parts of the globe, enabling us to better understand that the world needs a practical and urgent solution to address the challenging plight of refugees. We take this opportunity to commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for its efforts

to fulfil its obligations to provide refugee-protection programmes in challenging conditions.

Conflicts are the principal drivers of forced displacement. That reality demands that we address the structural causes of armed conflicts, which require collective long-term strategies. The role of States in the quest for preventive political and diplomatic solutions is crucial. The magnitude of the current statistics presented by the High Commissioner remind us that we are witnessing a time in human history when we have exceeded the highest numbers ever recorded. As States, we must act now.

The African continent is also affected by massive forced displacement and is home to more than 1 million of the world's displaced population. We acknowledge the refugee crisis on our continent. To address it, the African Union pledged to implement specific measures. In that regard, within the framework of the long-term vision encapsulated in Agenda 2063, in 2016 the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted the Common African Position, decision 604 (XXVI), to strengthen humanitarian action on the continent. The Common African Position defines Africa's new humanitarian architecture, which includes the creation of the African Humanitarian Agency as a vehicle for humanitarian action. The new humanitarian architecture also emphasizes addressing root causes and achieving durable solutions, as well as strengthening the capacity of States and other stakeholders, to address the challenges of forced displacement on the continent.

In that context, the Assembly of Heads of State, held in Nouakchott in July 2018, adopted decision AU/Dec.707 (XXXI), in which it declared 2019 as the year of "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa". In the same vein, we are proud about the fact that our Head of State, His Excellency President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, was appointed as the guarantor of that decision and initiative.

We understand that African efforts to encourage refugees should be supported and in line with international efforts. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of the sentiments expressed in the 2018 global compact on refugees, which demonstrated the commitment of the international community to deal more effectively with a large number of displacements. We commend countries that opened their borders to accommodate refugees independently of resource

constraints and call on the international community to fulfil its commitment to sharing burdens and responsibilities. We would like to specifically mention Bangladesh here.

This year, the African Union will commemorate the two key treaties on forced displacement: the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the tenth anniversary of the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). We hope that all of those legal instruments will be reflected in the vision of improving the lives of refugees. We welcome collaboration among the African Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other interested stakeholders.

In conclusion, we reiterate that all States must be united in the cause of refugees. We express our full commitment to cooperating in those urgent efforts.

I would like to ask a question. What kind of modalities can be taken into consideration for the establishment of a strong partnership between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the African Union to ensure the implementation of the decision of the Heads of State adopted in Nouakchott to find lasting solutions to forced displacement in Africa?

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): It is with a deep concern that we note that the most recent report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2017*, mentions that there are 68.5 million people who are forcibly displaced due to various forms humanitarian crises, of whom 25.4 million are refugees and asylum-seekers.

We believe that there are three main challenges that need to be considered priorities. The first challenge is new emerging conflicts that cause existing humanitarian crises to deteriorate. In its *Mid-Year Trends 2018* report, UNHCR mentions that an additional 5.2 million people were forcibly displaced in the first half of 2018 due to new conflicts. The second challenge concerns durable and sustainable solutions that are not adequately implemented. There are 1.4 million refugees in need of urgent resettlement and voluntary repatriation, based on the 2018 UNHCR report. The third challenge is the significant lack of funding. In 2019, UNHCR needs

\$8.7 billion in funding support, while currently only \$1.685 billion is available. Those are the challenges.

Such a bleak picture raises a hefty concern for transit countries, in particular developing countries, such as Indonesia. We currently host more than 14,000 refugees and asylum seekers from 47 countries, waiting to be resettled to third countries or voluntarily returned to their homeland. Indonesia is, of course, committed to alleviating any human suffering during humanitarian emergencies. In 2016, we enacted a presidential decree for assisting refugees, going beyond our international obligations.

Indonesia also collaborates closely with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration within the framework of their mandates to process and find a solution. I agree with Mr. Grandi that the key words here are “management” and “collaboration”. Unfortunately, with regard to such collaboration, the resettlement number for refugees in Indonesia has continued to decline from 1,200 in 2016 to only 508 in 2018. That is just a small example of the alarming trends we are seeing in terms of resettlement. Looking at this number, we also see a downward trend worldwide in the acceptance of refugees. We have to do something about that.

We are of the view that there are a number of approaches that need to be considered to address the challenges presented by the global refugee crisis. First, we need to address the root causes of humanitarian crises by, for example, mainstreaming the nexus between peace, security and development, establishing coherence within the United Nations system, and looking beyond the obvious causes, such as conflict or poverty, as Mr. Grandi mentioned, to newly identified causes, namely, climate change.

Secondly, we must promote an inclusive participatory process and a multi-stakeholder approach. A stronger synergy between the United Nations and regional and national entities, including all humanitarian actors and stakeholders, would strengthen the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. A participatory process is required not only in countries of origin but also in the transit and recipient countries. As Mr. Grandi mentioned, the burden on transit countries is getting much heavier. It is imperative to come up with more innovative funding and explore potential areas of collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations in order to

address the funding gap in humanitarian assistance, not only in the processing and hosting countries, but also in countries of origin, where root causes might be economic difficulties that may lead to conflict.

Lastly, the global compact on refugees should serve as guidance for the parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol towards improvement of refugees management, taking into account the specific resources, capabilities and international obligations of each country. Under current circumstances, the importance of the Global Compact cannot be overemphasized. States Members of the United Nations should embrace the compact in order to send the right signal that we are not closing ourselves off to the refugees that need our collective support. Member States should also embrace both the global compact on refugees and the global compact on migration; denial of either Compact would send the wrong signal to many in despair in refugee camps.

To be interactive, I would ask about the point that Mr. Grandi made on refugees choosing not to return. What other option do refugees have to returning when the countries that are expected to accept them are closing their doors? If the doors are closed, refugees will be in limbo, and the burden will be on transit countries.

The High Commissioner also spoke about the middle and the long terms. My delegation agrees with this perspective, but what is most important for refugees now is immediate solutions and the addressing of immediate challenges.

In conclusion, the important message of this meeting should be that solidarity still exists in the international community and that refugees have not been forgotten, nor will they ever be.

Mr. Yao Shaojun (China) I thank Mr. Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his briefing.

At present the global refugee population is growing year by year, and the refugee situation has been continuously deteriorating. Wars and conflicts are still primary contributors to the issue. Developing countries, which are recipients of the bulk of refugees worldwide, are under heavy social and economic pressures. At the same time, we have seen a decline in the will of the international community to aid and address the widening gap between humanitarian needs and financial assistance, the xenophobic sentiment coming

from many quarters, and the increasing politicization of refugee issues. The international refugee situation remains grim.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted the Global Compact on Refugees, which represents a positive initiative by the international community to cooperate in addressing refugee problems. Building on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, it also marks an important step towards global governance for refugees. China commends this outcome and supports the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), led by High Commissioner Grandi, in its efforts to facilitate full communication between parties towards gradual implementation of the Compact.

China believes that, based on respect for national sovereignty, a holistic approach to the refugee problem is needed to address both the symptoms and the root causes.

First, the international community, especially those with the capacity and responsibility to do so, should scale up its support and assistance to host countries and communities, and eliminate xenophobia and discrimination against refugees. The role of the relevant national Governments deserves particular respect in the addressing problems relating to internally displaced persons.

Secondly, efforts should be made to address the root causes of refugees and displacement, settling disputes peacefully, reducing armed conflicts, eradicating extreme poverty and promoting economic development. Only by addressing such root causes as war, conflict and poverty can there be fundamental solutions to refugee problems. The Security Council should, in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations Charter, intensify its efforts aimed at finding political solutions to hotspot issues.

Thirdly, there is a need to adhere to the basic international humanitarian norms of objectivity, neutrality and non-politicization. This constitutes an important bedrock for healthy development of the international cause of refugee protection. In dealing with refugee matters, the international community needs to follow the principle of objectivity and neutrality and refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the countries concerned, in order to avoid politicizing and abusing international refugee-protection mechanisms. China has long maintained good cooperative

relations with UNHCR, while continuously providing humanitarian assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels to improve the living conditions of refugees and host communities everywhere. China will continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR in humanitarian and development assistance and work with all parties to contribute to the improvement of global refugee governance.

Mr. Trullols Yabra (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank High Commissioner Grandi for his briefing today.

The Dominican Republic welcomes the convening of today's meeting and joins the collective aspiration to address and attend to the needs of the millions of people who are forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution. We are particularly interested in the search for mechanisms to tackle the serious problems and challenges arising from these human displacements, as well as in the communities that host the displaced. We believe that, in this search, it is necessary to support and involve displaced persons in order to respond to their specific needs.

Today, there is a plethora of images of displaced persons, of human suffering, of broken dreams, of mothers praying to return home, of fathers longing to work again and of children dreaming of having a childhood. Such is the case of Joury, a 12-year-old Syrian refugee who lives in a refugee camp in Jordan and draws pictures of gardens because that is what she remembers from her homeland, believing she will never be able to return there.

Similarly, in Afghanistan, it is estimated that more than 1,000 people, mostly women and children, are displaced every day. That was the case of Shakila, who is a refugee in Greece, having left Afghanistan with her husband and three children looking for a better life, which she is still not sure she will find.

In Southern Sudan, the situation is critical. Food insecurity has motivated 4 million people to leave their homes in search of safe haven. Their situation is aggravated by the effects of climate change, such as drought and floods, which have led to massive shortages of safe drinking water. Such is the case of Angelina, who has left her village several times. Angelina swam through deep waters with her son floating on a plastic raft to shelter, where she depends on humanitarian assistance to survive. She would be happy if she could

provide for her children, even if that means planting and producing her own food.

In Myanmar, the situation is no less pressing. The massive wave of Rohingyas that crossed the border into Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh brings together more than 1 million people who depend on humanitarian aid to cover their basic needs. We cite the case of Daw Phyu, mother of four children, widow, who left Myanmar in June 2012, leaving behind her daughter who lives with a disability. She met her a month afterwards and, using sign language, told her that she was sad. After six years, Phyu Ma was still living in a one-bedroom hut, waiting for a safe opportunity to return home.

In Somalia, the case is no different. After two decades of conflict and countless natural disasters, more than 3 million Somalis are refugees or internally displaced and nearly 2.5 million do not have their basic food needs met. That is the reality of Hadija, a 22-year-old girl, who had to leave her village, along with her two children, after she lost her livestock to drought, and is waiting in a refugee camp to return to her normal life. But she is 1 out of 155,000 from the same area who now depend on the charity of friends and relatives and who lack hope for a better future.

In view of that deterioration, it is crucial that we seek solutions to the crisis. We understand that it is important to strengthen and promote a complementary approach between humanitarian action and development initiatives in order to address the root causes of conflict, to ensure sustainable solutions for refugees once they return to their places of origin and to create the conditions to increase the resilience of affected communities.

We cannot fail to mention the situation affecting the millions of Venezuelans who have had to leave their country in search of food, medicine and better living conditions. For them, abandoning their home has not been an option. It has been a necessity.

In conclusion, we recognize that we are facing the greatest refugee crisis in history and that it represents an enormous challenge for the United Nations and its partners, as well as for the host communities. We also believe that the human dignity of refugees must be kept at the centre of all our actions. We reiterate that, in any context, the relocation or return of refugees should be in safe and dignified conditions and voluntary on the basis of information about the conditions that await them.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his briefing. I think that this is clearly a topic that moves very many members of the Council. I also wanted to pay tribute to the High Commissioner and all his staff, including those around the world. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) probably sees people at the worst point in their lives and the High Commissioner and his team do an incredible job in the face of increasing insecurity and displacement. I ask to please pass on our thanks. The United Kingdom is a strong supporter of UNHCR through both core and country funding, and we gave nearly \$100 million dollars last year. I was also very interested to hear what the representative of Equatorial Guinea said about the African Union interest in this subject as well as its desire to establish a humanitarian agency. It is very good to see humanitarian issues receive such prominence.

The principal role that UNHCR plays with regard to returns is very much one that sets the international standard and that by which we should judge these major conflicts. Returns are a part of the key durable solution. It is important to remember that for the majority of refugees and host countries alike return is, by some margin, the preferred option. But as Mr. Grandi said, it is not always available and sometimes results in some rather pernicious trade-offs where refugees are encouraged to go back in circumstances that are very far short of safe, voluntary and dignified. I think that he is right to challenge us to be more strategic, and I would welcome anything more he could say in that regard.

Looking at the individual countries that he mentioned, I think they show that the reality is difficult. I thought what he said about Libya was worrying. I am sorry that the staff are under pressure. If there is anything more that he can tell us about what immediate steps would be helpful, that would feed into the discussions we hope to have later this week on Libya.

In Syria we do not support returns where the conditions do not allow time and we look to UNHCR to continue to set the standard of the three safe, dignified and voluntary principles.

Looking at Myanmar, we have worked hard with UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme to try and help create conditions. The 34 projects the High Commissioner mentioned are welcome but they are certainly not enough. We would

welcome any more he could say about how exactly we could help to expand those projects from the Council and what exactly the state of play is on the memorandum of understanding with the Government.

That said, we recognize the challenges of a situation like the Rohingya and Myanmar and Bangladesh. We are not ideological about how the repatriation process occurs as long as international principles are upheld. Tomorrow we will have a briefing on Venezuela, where the figures that the High Commissioner was quoting will be very relevant. I look forward to hearing what the representatives of Peru and Columbia have to say later in the week about the refugee burden.

I wanted to turn to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. From our perspective, it is a major opportunity to deliver longer-term solutions, looking at jobs, education, infrastructure and opportunities for livelihoods, but, as we all know, they must be delivered in a way that supports those host communities and countries that are generous hosts. I believe that the whole-of-society approach in the Global Compact must be right, getting the right mix of actors around the table and, by doing that, allowing UNHCR to concentrate on its core mandate. We look forward to the first global refugee forum in December and we are ready to play our part.

Lastly, I was struck by what Mr. Grandi said about toxicity. I think that is something to which the Council ought to return. As we look at individual country situations, we ought to remind everyone of the humanitarian principles in play.

Mr. Lewicki (Poland): Let me begin by thanking Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his very refreshing briefing. Let me also take this opportunity to join other colleagues in commending him and his staff for their commitment, their daily work and the assistance that they provide to all those poor people in dire humanitarian situations.

Last year alone, there were 68.5 million people forcibly displaced. That number speaks for itself and I cannot agree more with what the High Commissioner said about the flow of refugees being just a symptom of the ongoing conflict, widespread and systematic human rights violations and abuses, the mismanagement of economic corruption and so on. Two facts are that all these refugees come from just five or six countries that are on the Council's agenda. Mr. Grandi mentioned Syria, Myanmar and Libya. I can also add Afghanistan,

South Sudan, Somalia and, last but not least, a country that is our close European neighbour, that is, Ukraine. We are facing a number of challenges. As he said, we need to focus not on curing symptoms — that is not enough — but on addressing the root causes of these flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. In order to do that in the most effective way, we need to apply a holistic approach. In 2005 all our leaders acknowledged the link between security, developments and human rights. If we, as the Council, want to address these problems, we need to look at all three angles.

Let me touch on three issues that are of great importance to Poland — humanitarian law, the situation of children and the situation of persons with disabilities.

First, the promotion of and compliance with international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law are essential for ensuring the protection of the lives, health and dignity of people caught up in conflict. This year, as we mark the seventieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the twentieth anniversary of the protection-of-civilians agenda, we need to accelerate efforts and call on States and non-State actors to universally and unequivocally respect, implement and ensure respect for international human rights law. In addition, the Security Council and all States Members of the United Nations should ensure the protection of humanitarian activities and the lives of humanitarian and medical personnel. I also commend the efforts made in this regard by our German and French colleagues.

Children constitute about half of the refugee population. I am the father of a 7-year-old boy, and it is hard to imagine him needing to flee our home without food or the possibility of going to school. Children are particularly vulnerable and should be provided with appropriate assistance and protection, health care, education and psychosocial support. Women and children also face an overwhelming threat of trafficking and sexual violence.

People with disabilities encounter barriers to accessing life-saving humanitarian assistance and health care and are at a higher risk of violence, exploitation and exclusion from available services. Let me recall what the Secretary-General, António Guterres, said at a time when he still held the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:

“Too often invisible, too often forgotten, and too often overlooked, refugees with disabilities are

among the most isolated, socially excluded and marginalized of all displaced populations”.

Forced displacement, be it disaster- or conflict-related, entails an enormous amount of human suffering. Addressing the rights and needs of all the various at-risk groups should be at the core of the international response to refugees.

In conclusion, I thank High Commissioner Grandi once again for his briefing. We support the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of refugees around the world. We would like to encourage the High Commissioner to brief the Council more often, particularly when early action is needed. Poland will continue its work in the Security Council to secure peace and prevent conflicts.

Finally, I would like to ask the High Commissioner how he sees the process of strengthening the nexus not only between security and development but also, and we cannot overlook this, the third pillar — security, development and human rights — in addressing the various humanitarian situations around the world.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland, who I believe was able to take some time from the representative of China, whose statement was shorter.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation): I have an innovative idea about the Thuringian hourglass. Lay the sand watch flat when I am speaking.

(spoke in Russian)

We welcome the High Commissioner for Refugees and thank him for his briefing. We deeply appreciate the effective work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in situations of major humanitarian crisis that lead to mass flows of refugees. We hope that the new Global Compact on Refugees, whose adoption our country supported, will help to strengthen the international regime for the protection of refugees.

Assistance to refugees and stateless persons today is an essential component of the complex efforts aimed at maintaining international peace, security and stability. We share the concern about the difficult migration situation in Europe, resulting partly from the ongoing uncontrolled arrival of people from the Middle East and North Africa. The cases of deaths at sea and the presence of unaccompanied children in

mixed migration flows are especially worrying. We feel compelled to point out once again that to a great extent this situation is the consequence of irresponsible interference in the internal affairs of States in the Middle East and North Africa. The situation of refugees and forced migrants within Libya who are being held in detention centres and encounter various forms of ill treatment needs attention and solutions, as the High Commissioner said today.

Russia is contributing to the strengthening of the international refugee protection regime. We are receiving and making arrangements for a significant number of refugees and forced migrants from various countries, including Ukraine, providing a large volume of humanitarian assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels and assisting States of origin in creating conditions enabling refugees to return. In the summer of 2018 Russia launched an initiative to facilitate Syrian refugees' voluntary return home, and we are seeing sustained momentum in that process. Approximately 1,000 people are travelling to Syria every day, primarily from Lebanon and Jordan. Since July 2018 a total of more than 177,000 people have returned. We have to help Syrians realize that legitimate right. We believe that the international humanitarian organizations have an increasingly large role to play in this, and we urge UNHCR to intensify its efforts to assist in the repatriation of Syrians. For its part, Russia is also working in this area. More and more areas of the country are becoming safe for the population. We are working actively to restore basic infrastructure such as water and electricity supplies, schools, hospitals and housing, as well as conducting humanitarian mine clearance and giving those in need urgent care.

I want to particularly emphasize that the process of returning Syrian refugees and internally displaced persons must be voluntary and should not be hedged about with artificial conditions or politicized, as some are trying to do by openly intimidating people who wish to return home and hindering them from leaving refugee camps. Instead of helping refugees return and get resettled in their permanent homes, the bulk of international assistance is going to supporting refugee camps outside Syria and thereby maintaining the status quo. We are particularly worried about the situation in Rukban camp, where tens of thousands of people are being kept on a humanitarian drip in totally unacceptable conditions. An overwhelming majority of them want to leave the camp. Russia has opened two

humanitarian corridors to enable people to leave the camp, and the Syrian Government has also made the necessary preparations for people to be evacuated to their chosen places of residence in Latakia, Khalidiya, Al-Amar, Homs, Mkhin, Al-Qaryatayn and Palmyra as well as the suburbs of Damascus and Aleppo.

Together with representatives of UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Syrian Red Crescent Society and the Syrian authorities, the Russian military has organized a number of coordination meetings for devising step-by-step measures aimed at resettling Rukban residents. We are willing to continue the dialogue on Rukban with all interested parties, including the United Nations, the United States and Jordan, without preconditions or any politicization of the humanitarian aspects of the problem.

In conclusion, I would like to once again underscore that Russia intends to continue to provide comprehensive support and assistance to UNHCR's activities, which are vitally important to the millions of people who have been forced to leave their homes.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this informational meeting and to thank Mr. Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for his timely and comprehensive briefing as well as for the work that he is doing along with his selfless staff under very difficult conditions.

Peru has been following with particular concern the alarming situation that approximately 25 million refugees are experiencing at the global level, while expressing its solidarity with them. We realize that this situation could have an effect on every country, but especially developing nations. In the face of this alarming figure, which is growing annually, we welcomed the adoption in December 2018 of the Global Compact on Refugees, which constitutes the legal basis for establishing more just and equitable mechanisms to fight against xenophobia and discrimination. The Compact reflects the commitment of the international community to finding mechanisms for cooperation in dealing with cross-border problems and supporting conditions in countries of origin to facilitate the safe and voluntary return of refugees. Promoting implementation that includes various sectors, especially international and regional financial institutions, is particularly interesting, which is why we would like to

ask Mr. Grandi to further elaborate on his remarks in that regard.

Addressing this topic is a priority for the Council. Suffice it to say that 57 per cent of the world's refugees come from countries that figure on the agenda of the Council: South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria, not to mention the serious situation of the Rohingya in Bangladesh and the critical state in which the migrants and refugees from Libya find themselves, as well as the potential deterioration they face due to recent clashes. Similarly, we are worried about the ongoing increase and grave situation of the Venezuelan refugees and migrants throughout the continent, including my own country — an issue that will take up at length tomorrow. We highlight the spirit of solidarity and the resources that have been deployed by the countries that are receiving those refugees, despite the difficulties that such mobilizations may trigger.

Peru believes that it is key to address the root causes of those international displacements and respond, in a timely manner, collectively to the various challenges and vulnerabilities that we share, such as climate change, desertification, growing inequality, corruption, an arms build-up and violent extremism, which leads to terrorism, among other phenomena of a global reach and transnational dimension. All of that must be addressed with increased participation by women and young people, which is the only guarantee for building a common vision of a peaceful, inclusive and sustainable future.

In that regard, the Security Council has a role to play in prioritizing efforts and tools for conflict prevention and creating sustainable peace. To that end, a more systemic perspective should be promoted, based on timely risk analyses and management plans, which the Secretary-General and the various agencies and programmes of the United Nations system must provide.

In conclusion, Peru wishes to renew its commitment to the important work of Mr. Grandi and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We hope to have an opportunity to continue our exchange of views in future. We are sure that under his leadership, and beyond the complexity of the current refugee crises and with the support and political will of the international community, we will be able to offer a new opportunity to those millions of people who today find themselves vulnerable and in a critical situation.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to welcome Mr. Filippo Grandi and thank him very much for the comprehensive and detailed briefing that he just delivered. I would also like to commend the important role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I appreciate the relations between Kuwait and UNHCR, particularly because we are suffering from the refugee problem in many States in our region. We have contributed as much as we can through voluntary contributions to UNHCR. We will continue to do so in order to alleviate the suffering of refugees.

Mr. Grandi gave many important details in his briefing, and I will not repeat the figures that he cited. However, it is evident that there is a relationship between the Security Council and UNHCR. When the Council is unable to resolve, contain or manage a conflict, that complicates the work of UNHCR and other relevant specialized agencies. The relationship between the Council and UNHCR, as well as with other relevant organs, is therefore a proportional one. The inability to prevent the outbreak of conflicts early on and address their root causes leads to flows of refugees with an enormous political and financial cost, subsequently causing destabilization at the regional level. That is a vicious cycle of conflict and displacement.

Kuwait believes in the importance of resolving conflicts early on to prevent them from becoming exacerbated, by tackling their root causes in order to ensure that they do not break out again. That is in line with the Secretary-General's vision and the Organization's role, which, through all of its organs, must achieve that objective. The Security Council must play its role and shoulder its responsibilities by using all the tools at its disposal to put an end to conflicts and maintain international peace and security.

There is no doubt that a durable and effective response to the challenges related to forced displacement will be possible only by addressing them comprehensively and in all their dimensions. An international crisis requires an international approach to tackle it, based on regional and international cooperation. We attach great importance to the efforts of UNHCR to respond holistically to the refugee problem through the Global Compact on Refugees. We also call for compliance with international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, while also ensuring the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

Humanitarian assistance is an important element in responding to the current displacement crisis. Preserving dignity for all of those in need requires effective and short term plans as well as sustained and long term solutions. We continue to see generosity and solidarity from the international community regarding refugees all over the world, as noted by Mr. Grandi in his briefing. It is necessary to stress the importance of the role played by the communities and States that host and support significant numbers of refugees. We also stress the role of institutions, civil society and non-governmental organizations that work tirelessly to provide a dignified life and rehabilitation to all those in need in conflict areas.

The United Nations and other humanitarian organizations must be allowed to do their work and provide complete and unhindered humanitarian assistance as well as basic services to the refugees, including health care and education in addition to psychological and social support. We call on the international community to continue supporting UNHCR.

I have two questions.

First, with respect to the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need, we have witnessed crises that United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, have had to address in order to reach those in need of assistance, and sometimes they have taken months to achieve that. On several occasions, Kuwait has proposed that the right to the veto within the Council not be used to prevent the delivery of assistance to displaced persons and refugees. Against that backdrop, what can the Council do?

Secondly, with respect to the memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and the Government of Myanmar, Mr. Grandi mentioned the issue of the Rohingya refugees and their return in a safe, dignified and voluntary manner. That is an international requirement. Myanmar says that it is not opposed to the return of refugees, and Bangladesh says that it also agrees on their return. As the memorandum of understanding nears its end, and given that the conditions on the ground are not yet conducive for their return, how can we contribute to improving those conditions and accelerate the return of refugees to their places of origin?

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi for his very enlightening and

important briefing. Allow me to also pay sincere tribute to his work, as well as to the teams of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for their outstanding work in protecting refugees and defending their rights. UNHCR, as Mr. Grandi knows, can count on the strong support of France in the context of our exemplary partnership, just as it can count on France's commitment to ensuring unconditional respect for the right of asylum in Europe and around the world.

As High Commissioner Grandi pointed out, 2019 is the year of a bleak record: 70 million people have been forced into exile and are refugees. Without going into a list of the countries concerned, I would like to echo what Mr. Grandi said and stress three priorities that we think must guide our action: first, the sharing of responsibilities; secondly, a response to the root causes of displacement and, thirdly, respect for the fundamental principles to guide and aid the return of refugees.

First, with regard to the sharing of responsibilities and the need for solidarity, the reception of refugees is an international obligation and a moral duty. It is the responsibility of States to protect on their territory foreign nationals who have fled their country as a result of persecution. We must also ensure safe and legal routes for those people, who too often risk their lives to go into exile. It is in that spirit that France has organized protection missions, together with UNHCR, in the Niger and Chad. Approximately 1,150 particularly vulnerable refugees have been resettled in France. We must do everything we can to support countries that are at the forefront of large-scale displacements. It is only through a concerted approach that we will be able to improve the care of refugees and achieve better management of migration flows. We must also increase our efforts to combat traffickers and smugglers. That, too, is a priority.

It is in that spirit that the Global Compact on Refugees was developed and adopted. We must redouble our efforts to move into the implementation phase of the Compact. The Global Refugee Forum to be organized by UNHCR in December will be a major step towards providing a collective and effective response to the challenges of refugee protection and care. France will be present, alongside UNHCR, which is by far the international humanitarian organization that has received the most humanitarian assistance from France. We call on all States and relevant actors to participate

and commit themselves to the implementation of the Compact.

Secondly, with regard to the response to the root causes of population displacement, as everybody knows, insecurity and mass human rights violations, which unfortunately characterize conflicts, are the main causes of displacement. It is important to prevent and suppress them. It is also up to the Security Council to establish the conditions for a lasting settlement of crises.

In Syria, where over 6 million people are internally displaced and 5.7 million are refugees, only a credible political process can guarantee stability and prevent further refugee flows. In Libya, the escalation of violence has already pushed 2,800 people out of conflict areas and aggravated the already precarious situation of migrants and refugees. We call on all Libyan leaders to remain engaged in the process led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as only a political solution will make it possible to stabilize the country in a sustainable manner and address the challenges related to migration. In that regard, I have a question for the High Commissioner, echoing what he already said concerning cooperation between UNHCR and the Libyan authorities to ensure the protection of migrants and refugees.

With regard to Palestinian refugees, of whom there are more than 5 million in the region, we call for a realistic, equitable, just and lasting solution within the framework of a future Israeli-Palestinian agreement, based on internationally agreed parameters. In the meantime, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) must continue to receive our full support in the context of the suspension of the American contribution. For its part, France has doubled its contribution to UNRWA this year.

Finally, in Venezuela, which we will discuss again tomorrow, about 5,000 people are leaving the country every day, and there are now more than 3.4 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees. The origins of that crisis are political and institutional, and only new, free, transparent and credible presidential elections will bring it to an end.

Thirdly, with regard to respect for fundamental principles for the return of refugees, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure the voluntary nature of the return of refugees to their countries of origin, as

Mr. Grandi said. States must ensure conditions for a safe and dignified return based on access to information about the place people are planning to return to. As everyone knows, in Syria or Burma, just to take two examples, such conditions are not being met at all today. In Syria, France is extremely concerned about reports of arbitrary arrests by Syrian security services of refugees who are returning home. In Burma, there will be no possible return for Rohingya refugees without full freedom of movement and access to basic services.

To return to what Filippo Grandi said at the beginning of his important briefing, the attitude towards refugees is one of the defining characteristics of a time and of the compass that guides our contemporaries. In echoing what he said, I would like to reiterate France's conviction that only a global, collective, responsible and supportive approach will make it possible to respond effectively and sustainably to the challenge posed by the increasing number of refugees. France is determined to continue to spare no effort to that end.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): The United States is committed to assisting those displaced by circumstances beyond their control. As such, we remain the largest single donor of humanitarian assistance worldwide. We are focused on providing assistance as close to refugees' homes as possible to help them until they can return home safely, voluntarily and with dignity. However, humanitarian needs vastly outpace the capacity of any single donor. We encourage other States, as well as development actors and the private sector, to increase humanitarian contributions worldwide.

As many colleagues have said, the Global Compact on Refugees provides a basis for predictable response and greater burden-sharing among Member States. We support the Compact's primary objectives. We encourage non-refugee hosting countries and countries that do not provide humanitarian assistance to do more. We support easing pressure on refugee-hosting countries, including through third-country options, and facilitating opportunities beyond traditional resettlement. We also support efforts to improve conditions in countries of origin to allow for safe and voluntary returns.

We commend the tremendous efforts of the many hosting countries. That includes countries that have opened the doors to an unprecedented plight of millions of vulnerable people from Venezuela and from Syria. We note the admirable steps countries around the world

take to protect refugees. Ethiopia is expanding refugees' access to work, education and other basic services. Jordan has committed to allowing all children access to public education. In Turkey, nearly 4 million refugees have access to free health care, work and education. Thailand has granted nationality to over 30,000 stateless people, and Pakistan has started a national conversation on offering citizenship to refugees born there.

We must avoid temptation to press prematurely for returns of individuals to countries or regions that they fled. Syria is one example where, as the High Commissioner just told us, most refugees are not ready to return. The conditions in many places of return are not safe. We are concerned about the reports of involuntary returns in some contexts, and call upon States to act in accordance with their obligations under international law and to respect the principle of non-refoulement. We encourage the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and its partners to redouble efforts to monitor conditions of those who return to their areas of origin, both refugees and internally displaced persons. In that context, I would like to ask the High Commissioner for his non-politicized view of the current options for the Rukban camp residents, and to what extent he believes that they have a safe, voluntary and dignified option to return.

We encourage States to avoid actions that could exacerbate displacement. Refugee returns are more likely to be sustainable if basic safeguards, such as legal rights, access to land, housing, social services and economic inclusion, are in place. They decrease the likelihood that refugees would need to seek safety across international borders again. We wholly support the High Commissioner's discussion on finding solutions at the outset of a displacement crisis, addressing the root causes and the drivers of displacement and effectively managing movement due to multiple factors or mixed migration flows. As Secretary Pompeo said, the best way to help is to work to end conflicts that drive displacement in the first place. Seeking to resolve such conflicts is a core responsibility of the Council and one we must fully embrace.

For over a year, we have sought to address the root causes of the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela through this body, to no avail. To suggest to Venezuela's neighbours, which collectively host more than 3 million refugees, that the situation does not threaten regional security and stability is as erroneous now as it has been since the crisis began. We will continue to sound

the alarm on the dire humanitarian situation of the Venezuelan people, including in tomorrow's discussion.

I thank you again, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting to discuss the situation for millions of displaced people around the world, who have the same hopes and dreams for the future that we all have: access to education for our children, basic rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship and, most importantly, safety and security to live our lives. The United States will continue to lead efforts to support that future.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Sir, for taking the initiative to convene today's meeting, and Mr. Grandi for his inspiring presentation.

As we know, the number of displaced persons throughout the world has never been so high: 68.5 million, including more than 25 million refugees. Today's briefing therefore has its rightful place on the Security Council's agenda, given the links between conflicts and flows of refugees and internally displaced persons. In that regard, the drastic increase in the number displaced persons cannot become the indicator of our decreasing ability to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts. The emergence of flows of refugees and internally displaced persons is, in many cases, a warning sign. They should therefore be considered an early-warning sign and be included in the analyses and reports submitted to the Security Council so as to improve our response and prevention capacity. I would like to ask the High Commissioner for Refugees about his opinion on that issue. How can we work on that aspect of early warning?

Secondly, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) places protection at the core of its mandate. Belgium supports the centrality of protection through a strong partnership with UNHCR. Such protection must remain at the core of all humanitarian action that supports displaced persons, as they face many additional risks, ranging from discrimination to serious violations of their rights. Given the additional vulnerability of women and children to the risk of violations, including sexual violence, we call on the United Nations and other humanitarian partners to pay particular attention to their specific needs and provide specialized medical and psychosocial services for victims of sexual violence.

With regard to protection, we recall that displaced persons are protected by human rights through international humanitarian law and refugee law, as appropriate. We call on all States Members of the United Nations to respect the principle of non-refoulement.

The High Commissioner mentioned the issue of returns. We believe that returns and reintegration must be an integral part of peace processes. Parties to conflict must provide the necessary guarantees to ensure that refugees can return in a safe, voluntary, dignified, well-informed and sustainable manner. Accompanying measures must be put in place, with a view to lasting reconciliation and transitional justice. Furthermore, refugees themselves, as well as diasporas, can make a valuable contribution to peace and reconciliation efforts; their role as actors in such processes must be supported.

Thirdly, the shocking number of forced displacements, including refugees, leads us to reaffirm the importance of international cooperation on the issue of refugees. In that regard, Belgium supports the Global Compact for Refugees, developed by UNHCR, and hopes that its adoption will help give new impetus to international cooperation in that area. Given that almost 60 per cent of refugees are hosted by only 10 countries and that 85 per cent of refugees are in developing countries, the Compact quite rightly prioritizes support for host countries, responsibility- and burden-sharing and the quest for durable solutions. That approach prevents lost generations, in particular in protracted crisis situations, due to the lack of health care, education and psychosocial support.

I would like to end by paying tribute to the outstanding work done by the High Commissioner and his team.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Germany.

I will start off where Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve ended and thank you, Mr. Grandi, for your work. You work to assist people who are in very dire circumstances. Our colleague of the Dominican Republic gave examples from all over the world. When we talk about 70 million refugees, we are talking about the fate of 70 million individuals — children, women and men. Therefore, we encourage him to continue his work. He always radiates hope and optimism. I think that that is the only way to survive the challenge. But, we need that. I ask that he please continue his work. Germany

will always support him. We try to be a reliable partner. In 2018, I believe, we were the second-largest donor to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. As others have requested, I ask that he please convey to all his staff our admiration and support for all they do.

As our French, Belgian and American colleagues have said, the Global Compact for Refugees is a true milestone and shows the capacity of the multilateral system to tackle highly complex issues. The key, as the High Commissioner said, is shared solidarity and, as others here have said, equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We have to talk about implementation.

With regard to host countries, like others before me, I would like to underline how much we value the actions of Syria's neighbours — Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt. We also value the actions of Bangladesh and Venezuela's neighbours, from Colombia to Peru to Ecuador. Such action is extremely important. It is also very important for refugees to be given a chance because it allows them to return to their homeland. When they are in third countries, it is less likely that will return to their homes. We subscribe to what Mr. Grandi and others have said with regard to returns. Returns must be voluntary, safe, dignified and well-informed. We also had a discussion regarding Rukban. Russia and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees must work closely to guarantee that returns occur as described previously and that returnees do not face arrest or forced conscription or find their homes expropriated.

With respect to Libya's dreadful situation, I would encourage the High Commissioner to remain engaged and to stay there. There is one phenomenon in Libya I would like to highlight. It is the fate of women, children and refugees. They are the most vulnerable, in Libya, certainly, and in other places. We support what the High Commissioner is doing and ask that he put special emphasis on the fate of those refugees.

I would like to end by touching on Myanmar. Can the High Commissioner say a bit more about the 34 projects? What do they entail? Can we build on them?

With respect to Bangladesh, I would like to pay tribute to what that country, which is not one of the richest on the planet, is doing. What is the situation of the refugees there? I have also heard that they may be placed on an island. What would the dangers be then for

the refugees in Bangladesh? What can or must be done to support them?

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to thank everybody again for having observed the hourglass. In response to my Russian colleague and his horizontal proposal, this approach was used by the Foreign Minister of Haiti (see S/PV.8502), but I think we can function without using the hourglass horizontally. I also thank everyone for all the questions that have been raised. There were so many of them.

I do not know if the High Commissioner shares my enthusiasm about the number of questions, but I now give him the floor to respond.

Mr. Grandi: I thank everyone for the many expressions of appreciation and support that I have heard this morning. As expressions of support both from the Security Council as an institution — the supreme body responsible for peace and security, and one that is intimately related to our work — and from many — in fact, all — representatives of the individual countries on the Council, they are encouraging for us.

For the sake of brevity, I will try to group the numerous questions and remarks that I have heard, starting perhaps with the issue of returns, which has been mentioned by many. It is a quite a complex issue. I touched on it in my opening remarks. Of course, we have to be clear, once again, on the fact that, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the return of refugees to their homes has to be safe, dignified and secure. These are the three pillars of return; they are necessary if we want to ensure that returns are happening in a context of international protection. It is also true that returns that are safe, dignified, well supported and voluntary have a chance to be more sustainable. Returns that happen in less-than-ideal conditions very often translate into fresh displacement. We have seen it in many places. Then it becomes even more difficult to help people, and a situation is created that could be a seed for further conflict. It is therefore also an issue that I would invite Council members to consider from their stability/security perspective.

But, of course, when people choose to go back — and sometimes people do choose to go back in difficult circumstances — we see some of them going back to Syria, and we see some of them going back

to other difficult situations — then those people need humanitarian support. We all know that the question of aid and reconstruction in Syria is fraught with many political elements and dimensions. I invite and encourage to Council members is to delink the politics, which are inevitable after such a long war, from the humanitarian needs of the people, which have to be met.

What is also very important — and I said this in my opening remarks, but the Council is giving me the opportunity to raise it again — is that in situations like Syria — but the same applies to Myanmar and other situations of potential future return — is that my organization be present in the areas of return. That is also part of our protection mandate, especially if we are to convey a message of confidence to the people that there is a neutral, impartial observer to their returns, a presence that can be encouraging to them. This is sometimes quite difficult.

In Syria, we have established a protocol with the Government whereby, if we learn of things that can happen to people returning, we have a mechanism now established to raise these reports with the Syrian Government. But we can do that only if we are present. Otherwise, we could we cannot bring those reports to the authorities. When I was in Syria just a few weeks ago, I discussed this issue at length with the Syrian Government, and we are making some progress in that regard. Still, we need further encouragement and progress, and this applies — to reply to the question asked by the representative of the United States — to Rukban as well.

In Rukban, there is a very mixed population that has been deprived of humanitarian assistance for a very long time. We were last able to conduct a convoy from the Syrian side — that is, no longer from the Jordanian side — into Rukban in March, with the help of other United Nations agencies. But we assume that this will become increasingly difficult, so a solution is urgent. We have been able survey the intentions of the people in Rukban, and most of them want to go back home, once guarantees of safety are in place. The situation is very much like the situation of many refugees, and I have raised this issue, not only with the authorities in Damascus but also in Homs province, from which most of the people in Rukban come, to say that it is important that if these people go back — and I hope that they can go back — we can be present there to ensure a climate in which returnees can be confident. I

know that Rukban is a very complex situation because it is at the intersection of different security problems, but I would encourage those members of the Council that have influence and access to facilitate this solution and promote our presence as an additional guarantee that if people return — which they want to do — they will be doing so in safety.

There was an important question raised by the representative of Indonesia, which is often the case. I would like to say that it is true that, when I say that people also have the right not to return if they think that the conditions are not right to do so, there is the question of what is going to happen. I am thinking not only of the more recent crises, but of the Afghans, for example, who have been in exile for decades — 40 years this year — and of the Somalis who have been in the Horn of Africa for 25 to 30 years, and the list, unfortunately, is long. Conflicts tend to be very protracted. What do we then do for countries that are hosting these people literally for generations? I think that this was gist of the representative of Indonesia's question, and it is an important one.

I think that this is where the Compact can play a role. The Compact was put in place not just for new emergencies, but also for protracted ones. The Compact aims at mobilizing different types of resources, not just humanitarian but development resources, the role of the private sector and civil society and so on. It is really a new paradigm. The issue of alternative modes of financing was raised, and I think the Compact is already promoting such financing. We are already applying the Compact in about 15 countries in Africa and in Latin America, and we see that there is progress there in helping the host countries bear the responsibility they have been shouldering for so long. But we must continue to work on a solution, especially returns. We must also continue to say that resettlement, which many Council members have cited as an important solution, continues to be important. I am indeed concerned that the global resettlement figures have declined a great deal in the past couple of years. Resettlement will never be a mass solution for lots of people, but it is a solution of choice for people who are extremely vulnerable and exposed. I would therefore encourage the Council to continue to look at that aspect.

Returning to the Compact and what it represents and the new resources that we want to mobilize, I would very much like to echo the appeal made by the representative of the United States — by far our

biggest financial backer — in saying that the scope of “contributor” needs to be expanded, and not just through UNHCR. The Compact promotes a great deal of bilateral support to the countries hosting refugees. The World Bank and others have really shown the way. There is a great deal of interest in the private sector. I was at the Boao Forum for Asia in China just a few days ago. I was amazed at the interest of the Chinese private sector in supporting humanitarian operations worldwide. I think that there are new avenues that we can explore and are exploring that are very important.

Taking the cue from the Polish statement with regard to trafficking, it is a scourge that we all want to combat. That is also something of which the Council has been seized. Much of the emphasis has been on the control and security side. That is fair enough. It is a criminal activity that needs that kind of response. I think it also needs to be looked at more broadly. Creating legal pathways, and resettlement is one, but also, in the migration field, which is not mine, creating legal migration channels is the best competition to trafficking. Ultimately, that can really push it back.

There were a few questions on specific situations, such as from the United Kingdom representative on Libya. I think that the first priority, which the Council well knows, is to halt the current escalation of hostilities. Let me join the Secretary-General in appealing to all members for that to be done in a unified, strong manner. The voice of the Security Council must be heard because what is happening now in Libya is very dangerous. If that happens, I think it is important that the question put by the representative of France of the relationship between agencies such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration and the authorities needs to be reset. We cannot continue to operate under constant pressure, threats, intimidation and volatility of commitments made. If we want to address this problem, we need another paradigm of cooperation, and we would like the Council to help us to do that, but first and foremost is the cessation of this kind of hostility.

Unfortunately, I must say that since I do not know what the prospects are for scaling back the current surge in hostilities, I think that we must also be prepared for further displacement, including in some of the neighbouring countries, which we are working on.

On Myanmar, the 34 projects that have recently been approved are the results of two of the three rounds

of assessment that UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were able to conduct on the basis of the memorandum of understanding. The assessment should be in the range of 10 times more than that but that is what we were able to do in the narrow space that became available in the past few months before the Arakan Army offensive. That really was a setback. But it is a good sign that some of the projects identified and approved by the Government have now been approved for implementation. We need to continue to do that.

But let me say once again that we need to look at the other tracks. We need to look at freedom of movement for the Rohingya. There are many who are still in Myanmar. If nothing is done to alleviate the discrimination against their marginalization, there would be no incentive for those who are in Bangladesh to return. That is the key issue. It is not a matter of making a decision that these people go back. It needs to be created. But I am encouraged by it being said that I radiate optimism. A little optimism is needed if we have to work in such difficult situations. I am encouraged by this approval. As I said, I hope to visit soon. I will visit if I can go to northern Rakhine. I think that it is very important for me to see the situation there. I hope that we will also be able to continue. UNDP and UNHCR have indicated to the Government of Myanmar that they are ready to extend the memorandum of understanding but that they hope that the extension, if it happens — we do not yet know — will be accompanied by some practical results.

There was a question from the representative of Kuwait in that regard. Let me again say what could be a really important take-away here is access. In Myanmar also, access and presence are important. I reiterate that access by humanitarian organizations where people are in fragile situations continues to be key.

Finally, I want to go back to the first statement of the representative of Equatorial Guinea to thank him for reminding us, because I was given only 15 minutes at the beginning I could not mention that it is the African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa and the fiftieth anniversary of the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. That is a very important instrument and Equatorial Guinea has the task of conducting a series of activities to mark that solidarity, which is so strong and widespread in Africa. We should remember that I am not talking only about States but

the solidarity that is given to refugees in countless African villages that I have visited in my travels and that often means sharing the very little that is available in the absence of any other resources.

I believe that it is very significant that we work together. The partnership with the African Union is very strong and I think it can be further developed. We increasingly see that the right approach to addressing the refugee crisis and finding solutions is on a regional basis. We have learned many lessons working with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union on the Somali refugees in terms of both strengthening the protection in host countries and looking at solutions in Somalia. The next opportunity will be that if the peace process in South Sudan progresses, and we are watching that very closely, it will provide openings for cooperation to also solve the massive displacement. One third of the South Sudanese population is in exile. As we have been discussing with the parties, IGAD and the African Union, it is important that those in exile be kept informed of the progress of the peace process and have a voice in that. We have obtained some results in that regard. We must remember that this is a population that has left its country at least three times in the past. Their trust in peace is very fragile. If we want to gain it, we need to nurture it in the right manner. That is an example of cooperation with the African Union that we need to cultivate.

I should also mention that this year marks the midpoint of another important UNHCR campaign, launched by my predecessor, who is now the Secretary-General, on reducing and eliminating statelessness. That is another very important aspect of our work mentioned by the representative of the United States. Around the Executive Committee meeting in October, we will have a special event on statelessness. In December there is the Global Refugee Forum, which will mark the first anniversary of the Compact and in which we hope Member States will participate at the ministerial level to showcase progress made since the New York Declaration and pledge commitments and engagement for the future.

I have two final points. I thank the representative of France for having mentioned the necessary support to our sister agency the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). It is very important. The stability of the region also hinges on the possibility for the refugee

population, assisted by UNRWA, to remain in schools and to have access to jobs and health services. As a former Commissioner General, I not only thank him for that but also because the countries that are affected by that unresolved issue are those that are also hosting Syrian refugees. It is a combination that needs to be kept in mind in providing support to UNRWA.

The final point is to say that I appreciate what many said about the importance of linking humanitarian, human rights, development and peace and security work. I think that that is at the heart of the reforms in which the Secretary-General is encouraging all of us at the United Nations and Member States to participate. I think that it is really his ambition, if I have understood correctly, to bring together these different perspectives, which are sometimes in tension with one another, and to try to chart a way forward in which the United Nations can play a positive role.

When the Secretary-General conducts his executive committee meetings on various issues, we are often invited to participate, although we are not a standing member. This is really where all the dimensions of the crisis are analysed and the position of the United Nations

forged. I believe that this is very high on the list of priorities of the current United Nations administration.

It is important, in talking about peace and security, not to forget those who must not be left behind — the most marginalized and excluded. Refugees are such people. In discussing solutions, it must be remembered that they, too, must be included.

Some here were kind enough to say that we should have more frequent exchanges. I just want to say that this is the Council's choice. I am always available, as the Council is aware; I also come here to speak about specific situations. I think that the relationship, described so well by the Ambassador of Kuwait, between refugee issues and the peace- and security-related issues that the Council deals with is very clear, as this morning's debate has proved once again.

I thank Council members once again for having listened patiently to our views.

The President: I think that I speak for everyone in thanking Mr. Grandi for his statement and his initial remarks, and also for having responded to all the questions posed and comments made.

The meeting rose at noon.