
**Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme**

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Summary record*, Wednesday, 10 March 22, at 10 a.m. (hybrid)

Chairperson: Ms. Batistić Kos (Croatia)

Contents

Regional activities and global programmes (continued)

- a. Regional updates (continued)
- vi. East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (continued)
- vii. Southern Africa
- b. Global programmes, inclusion and resilience

Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

- a. UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed framework for 2023
- b. Financial Regulations and Rules

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

In the absence of Mr. Baddoura (Lebanon), Ms. Batistić Kos (Croatia), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

Regional activities and global programmes (*continued*)

a. Regional updates (*continued*)

vi. East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Banzet** (Canada) commended the generosity of host countries that had maintained open-door policies for refugees, and underscored the importance of finding sustainable, comprehensive solutions in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. In Ethiopia, it was vital to ensure the protection of all civilians, especially refugees and internally displaced persons, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence. Humanitarian partners should undertake joint needs assessments for the Tigray emergency, sharing data to strengthen the overall response. Expressing concern regarding the reported attacks on refugee camps in northern Ethiopia and the targeting of Eritrean refugees, he asked how the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was working with local authorities and parties to the conflict to ensure the safety of those refugees.

2. Encouraging progress had been made towards durable solutions in South Sudan; UNHCR should be commended for its active engagement with Government and development stakeholders in that respect. His Government urged UNHCR to scale up its coordination efforts in eastern Sudan to provide timely, gender-responsive humanitarian support, while ensuring there were no gaps in service delivery.

3. His Government recognized the progress made to operationalize the Global Compact on Refugees in Southern Africa, including through new partnerships and regional mechanisms to manage freedom of movement, regularization of stay and access to employment for refugees.

4. **Ms. Jahren** (Norway) welcomed the efforts of UNHCR and affected countries to protect and assist refugees and internally displaced persons in the region, and reaffirmed her Government's commitment to supporting that work. Expressing concern about the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on education, particularly for girls, she asked what progress had been made to prevent children dropping out of school.

5. The security situation of humanitarian workers in South Sudan was of grave concern; all possible measures must be taken to ensure their safety. Refugees also faced strategic protection threats, including trafficking and recruitment to armed groups, while conflicts had arisen between different groups in refugee camps. She requested further information on the steps taken by UNHCR to improve the situation and asked what progress had been made with the solutions initiative in Sudan and South Sudan.

6. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) commended the Office's efforts to facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation of citizens of Burundi. He also praised its collaboration with the Kenyan Government, notably on the resettlement of refugees from Kenya in the United States, and welcomed the refugee act passed in Kenya to promote refugee protection and inclusion, as well as recent measures to reduce statelessness. However, lessons should be learned from the Kalobeyei settlement and applied to the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps.

7. Welcoming UNHCR's efforts in Somalia to address new displacements, the lack of food and water, and the ongoing threat of violence, he urged the Government of that country to expand its work with the international community to improve stability and access to public services, which constituted necessary conditions of return for Somali refugees in the region. In Ethiopia, which also faced huge security challenges, UNHCR's invaluable protection and assistance efforts should be expanded to support the vast numbers of internally displaced persons, particularly in the northern part of the country. Eritrean refugees were another group suffering because of the conflict; his Government called on all parties to facilitate their relocation to the new Alemwach refugee camp as

soon as possible. There were also growing numbers of urban refugees in Ethiopia, and he welcomed the work by UNHCR and the Government of Ethiopia to protect them.

8. In South Sudan, commendable progress had been made by UNHCR, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Government towards implementation of the solutions initiative, and all parties should promote conditions for the sustainable reintegration of displaced persons. However, the continuing attacks against aid workers, and State and non-State impediments to impartial humanitarian access in South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia and other countries in the region were of grave concern. Given the rapid proliferation of new conflicts and the failure to resolve long-standing conflicts, all Member States needed to increase their efforts to address the root causes of forced displacement.

9. **Ms. Guadey** (Ethiopia) drew attention to her Government's work to provide protection to refugees, including specific measures to address the difficulties faced by Eritrean refugees. Although land had been provided for a new refugee site, the actions of the Tigray People's Liberation Front had held up relocation attempts; she therefore called on the international community to press for the relocation of Eritrean refugees to allow them to receive humanitarian assistance and protection. More generally, the same armed group was disrupting efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance to northern Ethiopia, including the people of Tigray, and it was concerning to see the indifference of international partners in that regard.

10. The combined effects of the conflict and climate change posed challenges regarding internal displacement. UNHCR should strengthen its work on climate-induced challenges, including by maintaining a budget commensurate with its increasing responsibilities for the camp coordination and camp management and shelter clusters. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of burden-sharing within the international community, calling for donation pledges to be fulfilled.

11. **Ms. Irish** (United Kingdom) expressed concern regarding the risks facing refugees in Ethiopia. Although UNHCR had made commendable efforts to support Eritrean refugees, including by expediting the issuance of visas to those with right of entry to the United Kingdom, it had not succeeded in tracing all the refugees who had fled from Tigray; those efforts should be redoubled now that the state of emergency had been lifted. Stressing the importance of UNHCR's technical expertise in efforts to address the ongoing protection and internal displacement crisis in Ethiopia, she asked how the Office intended to strengthen its capacity and leadership in that field, and requested an update on progress in implementing the recommendations of the 2020 UNHCR Ethiopia audit.

12. In relation to Sudan, she asked whether there was sufficient capacity in existing camps to receive potential additional refugees fleeing the Tigray crisis, and whether any other sites had been identified. Her Government also wished to know whether UNHCR was conducting return intention surveys among the 800,000 South Sudanese refugees in Sudan; that information would be essential to establish a long-term plan. Furthermore, had any clarity been obtained regarding the status of the 90,000 Syrians in the country? UNHCR's work to improve reporting and address gender-based violence and protection concerns at camps in eastern Sudan was commendable, as was the country refugee response plan; and the Office should continue to prioritize protection and safeguarding.

13. She agreed that South Sudan was not yet ready for large-scale facilitated returns, and urged the international community to note the risk of citizens being pressured to return in advance of the upcoming elections. Regarding the solutions initiative, UNHCR should engage with all stakeholders to ensure that the rights of displaced persons were respected, and all forms of durable solution considered. Returning to the Tigray crisis, she asked whether the Office's projected figures for the inflow of refugees into South Sudan had been accurate, and whether any pre-positioned relief items had been reallocated.

14. Her Government welcomed the development of a system for prioritizing refugee food assistance according to vulnerability in the context of limited resources in Uganda; that should be operationalized in 2022. Further details regarding the return intention surveys conducted in that country would also be welcome. Lastly, she praised the progress made in UNHCR negotiations with the Government of Kenya on the roadmap for solutions, and requested information about implementation of the plans prior to the June 2022 camp closure deadline. The shift away from camp closure towards arranging settlements was commendable.

15. **Ms. Lehoux** (Switzerland) commended UNHCR's collaborative work in South Sudan, noting that Government's efforts to welcome refugees from neighbouring countries, including by granting citizenship to nationals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Agreeing that conditions in South Sudan were not yet conducive to the facilitation of returns, she expressed concern that many voluntary returnees had once again been displaced due to insecurity, natural disasters and a lack of services. In that context, how was UNHCR responding to requests from the Government of South Sudan to support returns in view of the forthcoming elections?

16. Although UNHCR had taken measures to address protection concerns in eastern Sudan and improve communication with donors and partners, further efforts were needed. In dealing with the Ethiopian refugee crisis, Eritrean refugees should not be forgotten; in particular, standards in the Kassala camps must be improved. More generally, she observed that the conflict in Ukraine could have an impact on the economic and humanitarian situation in the region that could lead to greater displacement, and asked how UNHCR was preparing for such an eventuality.

17. **Mr. Ishida** (Japan) expressed concern regarding the challenges facing the region, notably the large-scale refugee flows due to the conflict in Tigray; the forced displacements in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan; and the high level of food insecurity in general. It was also necessary to address the humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the flow of refugees from the Central African Republic. His Government would therefore continue to provide financial support to UNHCR, including through a \$6 million contribution to the operation in northern Ethiopia.

18. **Mr. Senders** (Germany), speaking via video link, underscored UNHCR's crucial role in providing life-saving assistance in volatile displacement situations. His Government supported that role by providing flexible, multi-year financing for operations in the region, and planned to roll out additional funding mechanisms in line with its Grand Bargain commitments. Drawing attention to the extensive protection needs of internally displaced persons and Eritrean refugees, which called for a robust humanitarian response on the ground, he called on UNHCR to protect those populations and uphold the principle of non-refoulement.

19. **Ms. Temu** (United Republic of Tanzania), highlighting the efforts of her Government to provide asylum to those fleeing political instability, expressed concern that the regional update had not included figures regarding the number of refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania. She noted UNHCR's support for her country's humanitarian assistance programme, particularly the incorporation of host community development activities as part of the Kigoma Joint Programme, but called for additional financial assistance and greater innovation. It was encouraging that the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations had highlighted the issue of climate change; she hoped that mitigation measures could shortly be implemented in refugee camps.

20. Her Government believed that all refugees had a fundamental right to return home, and would therefore continue to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Burundi, although that country had a limited capacity to absorb returnees. Stressing the importance of burden-sharing within the international community, she therefore called for additional support to be provided in that respect to UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration.

21. **Ms. Nkweta-Salami** (Director of the Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, UNHCR) agreed that the situation of refugees in northern Ethiopia was a cause for grave concern. Many people in camps in Tigray were unable to move, and there was a desperate need for clean water and health-care services, which required access to fuel. UNHCR had called on all parties to cease hostilities and guarantee the safe passage of refugees to the new Alemwach site, which was currently under construction. Around 1,500 refugees had already been relocated. Although the conflict remained unpredictable, the Ethiopian Government, UNHCR and their partners would be able to provide protection and assistance more effectively at the new camp.

22. A number of refugee camps in Ethiopia had been caught up in fighting in recent years, including the Berahle camp in Afar and camps in the Benishangul Gumuz region. In the latter case, refugees had been transferred to a new location, while another site had also been provided in Afar by the Government. UNHCR was attempting to locate all those who had left the camps; a large number had gone to Addis Ababa, where the Government had allowed them to remain as urban refugees.

23. UNHCR had significantly scaled up its response to internal displacement in the country, expanding its operational footprint across northern Ethiopia and continuing to lead the protection cluster. It also co-led the camp coordination and camp management cluster in around 60 locations, housing more than half a million internally displaced persons. As that number continued to grow, the Office would consider how to scale up its operations still further and achieve the greatest impact. Gender-based violence continued to be a pressing issue, with high levels of risk among displaced populations. The level of violence and the age of the survivors was of particular concern, and required a multisectoral response. UNHCR had stepped up efforts to raise awareness, provide counselling and make referrals to medical services, while seven one-stop centres had been set up to provide a comprehensive response. However, those activities had been limited by poor access to cash, fuel and medicines.

24. In relation to the situation in eastern Sudan, the Office welcomed the decision by the Government of South Sudan to maintain an open-door policy for those fleeing Ethiopia. Additional support was being provided in Sudan, where a registration and verification process had been set up to provide refugees with documentation and legal protection. Training and assistance were being provided to the Government to help it maintain the civilian character of camps in eastern Sudan. UNHCR had also taken steps to address the tensions between certain ethnic groups and would continue to monitor those dynamics in the camps concerned.

25. Preparations were under way for the rainy season, including by pre-positioning emergency shelter kits, improving roads and infrastructure, and reinforcing shelters, with priority given to the most vulnerable refugees. Gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse were also an issue in camps in Sudan; UNHCR continuously sought to improve assistance to survivors, share information more effectively and better engage communities in assessing and mitigating the risks. It was also important to identify factors such as the lack of livelihood opportunities, and the risk of negative coping mechanisms, particularly among younger refugees and women.

26. The Office maintained contingency plans for all countries in the region. Overcrowding was certainly an issue, so efforts were under way to expand existing sites and find new ones, while maintaining good relations with host communities. The current camps were located close to mixed migratory routes, which brought greater risk of smuggling and human trafficking; UNHCR worked with partners in Sudan and Djibouti to prevent mixed migratory movements, reduce the likelihood of smuggling and human trafficking, and support victims.

27. UNHCR continued to monitor the situation in South Sudan, which had seen the return of more than 500,000 refugees and 1.3 million internally displaced persons in the past few years. Against that fragile and complex backdrop, the focus was on developing “pockets of hope” in partnership with development actors. Although UNHCR was not yet promoting or facilitating returns to South Sudan, it knew that returnees were seeking to rebuild their lives and communities there. Sustainable, lasting returns required the full implementation of peace processes, including security, the rule of law and good governance. Refugees from South Sudan were therefore being kept informed of developments, including in relation to future elections. Provision had also been made for the potential inflow of refugees from Ethiopia, and would be adjusted as assessments were updated.

28. The return intention surveys for nationals of Sudan and South Sudan were being coordinated by the Regional Bureau and should be completed shortly. Regarding the solutions initiative in both countries, the political track had been put on hold due to the developments in Sudan, although work continued on the operational track. In addition to regional strategies, a wide range of solutions – including return, integration and third-country options – was being examined with partners and stakeholders, with a strong focus on inclusion. She thanked all speakers for their comments and said that further detail would be provided in individual written responses.

vii. Southern Africa

29. **Mr. Tapsoba** (Regional Director for Southern Africa, UNHCR) described the challenges currently facing his region. Concerning socioeconomic trends aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic had severely affected persons of concern to UNHCR and host countries in the region. Deteriorating security conditions in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mozambique were generating further displacement and affecting UNHCR staff and their capacity

to access those in need. Despite joint efforts with the World Food Programme (WFP), food insecurity continued to give cause for concern because of a chronic lack of funding and donor interest in supporting the region's refugee populations. As a consequence, to stretch resources further, smaller food baskets were being distributed in countries including Mozambique. Furthermore, there were serious shortfalls in cash-based transfer distributions in Congo and Malawi and in both cash-based and in-kind transfer distributions in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Climate change and natural disasters affecting refugees and internally displaced persons in the region had the potential to cause further forced displacement and vulnerability.

30. Despite those challenges, UNHCR personnel were delivering life-saving assistance and solutions in the region supported by the Office's efforts to enhance duty of care, particularly for staff in high-risk environments. UNHCR had responded effectively to emergencies in the region in the previous year, including by implementing an "out-of-camp" policy to assist refugees from the Central African Republic; providing emergency protection and life-saving assistance following a volcanic eruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; continuing its emergency response in Mozambique; and stepping up efforts to fulfil its cluster responsibilities. The Office had also worked with countries to enhance protection and solutions and strengthen asylum systems, including by working with the Government of South Africa to address pending asylum applications; mainstreaming cash-based interventions in regular programming; and supporting departing and repatriated refugees. UNHCR had partnered with the International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges to train legal practitioners in the region; continued to lead inter-agency efforts to implement the Regional Refugee Response Plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo Situation; and, in partnership with the World Bank and the African Development Bank, facilitated the inclusion of persons of concern to UNHCR into 10 development projects in the region. UNHCR had also leveraged innovative technology such as solar-powered boreholes and real-time monitoring of water-distribution systems. Lastly, the organization had worked with partners to re-enrol children in schools and transform classrooms into multimedia learning hubs in Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

31. UNHCR would keep working in the Southern Africa region to secure protection and advance solutions for persons of concern to the Organization, including by supporting countries to fulfil pledges on refugees and statelessness; reinforcing emergency preparedness and response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique; helping governments to include persons of concern to UNHCR in national systems and empower refugees through effective community engagement; and strengthening regional collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and organizations in the United Nations system. Through the UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub, assessments had been conducted in refugee settlements in Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique to identify vulnerabilities, seek options for livelihoods and improve resilience. However, significant funding was required to address needs and enhance resilience capacity. He thanked donors and partners for their support.

32. **Ms. Clifford** (European Union) expressed concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation and growing needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was facing the largest food crisis in the world and the highest number of displaced persons in Africa as a result of the conflict in the country. She strongly condemned attacks on civilians, including internally displaced persons, and called on UNHCR to strengthen its efforts to ensure the protection of persons of concern to the organization and to scale up case management and protection analyses.

33. The crisis in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, was also of growing concern. UNHCR must remain fully engaged in efforts to provide life-saving assistance and protection, and strong and efficient coordination across the United Nations system would be crucial in overcoming the crisis. The European Union and its Member States would continue to support the efforts of UNHCR and governments in the region to address forced displacement.

34. **Mr. Makaila** (Chad, Group statement), speaking via video link on behalf of the Group of African States, took note of the regional updates provided on all four regions of Africa. It was deeply concerning that African citizens in Ukraine had been prevented from crossing borders to seek safety; he therefore urged all countries to respect international humanitarian law and show the same empathy to all individuals fleeing war without discrimination.

35. He expressed concern at the continued increase in forced displacement resulting from armed conflict, political crises, climate change and natural disasters. Internal displacement was becoming an increasingly acute problem in Africa and a decisive response was required to address its root causes. The international community should support the homegrown solutions envisaged by African countries and regional organizations and their efforts to implement them in order to generate a sustainable response to the humanitarian crisis in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. Humanitarian action should be combined with the creation of a favourable political environment for economic and social development, taking into account the priorities of the countries concerned.

36. The COVID-19 pandemic had made it difficult to implement humanitarian interventions in Africa over the previous year. However, he noted with satisfaction that UNHCR had continued to deliver on its global strategic priorities in Africa in collaboration with the countries involved, regional organizations and other local stakeholders in order to provide the assistance and protection needed for refugees to live dignified lives. Despite the implementation of border closures during the pandemic, UNHCR had continued to facilitate the voluntary return of thousands of refugees and create the conditions for their integration into national systems. He expressed the hope that the rollback of pandemic-related restrictions would enable UNHCR to effectively carry out its work and consolidate the gains made, and encouraged the Office to continue to support remote asylum case management. He commended the promotion of temporary measures to mitigate the disproportionate health and socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on refugees in Africa, including cash-based and in-kind assistance. However, such measures should not supersede the promotion of durable solutions such as voluntary return and integration, which were feasible in many contexts and should be mainstreamed.

37. The Group of African States had also been pleased to hear that the Office had provided technical support to Governments and local authorities in the development of policies to promote the inclusion of refugees in strategic, operational and COVID-19 response plans and to ensure their access to education. Such actions should galvanize all stakeholders to search for medium- and long-term solutions. He commended the willingness demonstrated by international partners to alleviate the pressure on host countries, strengthen self-sufficiency and resilience among refugees and seek global solutions to provide protection and assistance to affected populations throughout Africa.

38. His Group remained concerned at the persistence of gender-based violence and other abuse experienced by refugees, particularly among vulnerable groups such as women and children. He commended the steps taken by UNHCR to combat the phenomenon in Africa and called on all stakeholders to redouble efforts in that regard. He welcomed the significant progress made by African Governments in the creation of legal environments that favoured protection and efforts to combat statelessness, and noted that many were working to align their legal and institutional measures with the Global Compact on Refugees. He encouraged the Office to mobilize financial and technical support from various stakeholders to support those efforts and others made by African Governments with a view to fulfilling their international commitments.

39. Although African Governments had demonstrated strong political will to generate durable solutions for refugees, sufficient resources would be needed for that purpose. The international community should therefore ensure adequate, tailored and flexible financing to enable UNHCR to effectively fulfil its mandate in Africa. He urged the Office to redouble its efforts to expand the donor base in accordance with the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing and to explore innovative resource mobilization methods.

40. **Mr. Mal Wita** (Zambia), speaking via video link, thanked UNHCR for providing support to his Government in the area of refugee protection. Zambia had hosted refugees from several countries in Southern Africa for many years and had recently observed a new influx of asylum seekers, mostly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Somalia. His Government had recently adopted a comprehensive refugee response framework and was working to fulfil the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, including by assisting the integration of former refugees from Angola and Rwanda with the support of the Governments of those countries. It had also provided training concerning gender-based violence to state officials and representatives from other organizations. In order to continue assisting refugees, his Government would require financial support to repair roads to its border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the purpose of continuing voluntary repatriations; to develop a new national refugee policy; to cover a shortfall in funding for a Government programme aimed at improving food security among refugees; to develop

education infrastructure in refugee settlements; and to fund the provision of food to vulnerable refugee households that had lost income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

41. **Ms. Dourado** (Portugal) said that many countries in Africa continued to face challenges arising from a growing number of humanitarian emergencies that were driving forced displacement. She commended the longstanding generosity and solidarity of African countries hosting refugees and offering comprehensive support to those in need, and acknowledged UNHCR's important mission, in particular in the context of protracted and forgotten crises.

42. The conflict in Cabo Delgado had resulted in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in which over 3,600 lives had been lost, some 800,000 people had been internally displaced and humanitarian needs were increasing significantly. The crisis had been exacerbated by the impact of climate change and natural disasters, armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic. She praised the work done by UNHCR in Mozambique in conjunction with SADC, in particular regarding its efforts to support refugees and internally displaced persons, improve their access to basic needs and reduce food insecurity. She also welcomed the projects launched by the African Development Bank to provide electricity for refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities. Her Government had launched a quick response facility to meet the immediate needs of the Cabo Delgado population and had facilitated the development of a sustainable development multi-donor trust fund to help local actors to address challenges in Mozambique.

43. The humanitarian crisis affecting countries in the Sahel was also of growing concern. The region was undergoing a serious and multidimensional crisis that required a concerted and holistic response from all actors involved. It would be essential to find lasting solutions and address the root causes of the conflict and instability in order to foster good governance, development and greater resilience for the populations of the Sahel. Converging crises such as climate change, conflict and violence, chronic poverty and underdevelopment, growing demographic pressure and unprecedented food insecurity were creating a perfect storm together with the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, and already-weak basic services were being strained, resulting in growing humanitarian needs. Addressing those challenges through the consistent and effective implementation and operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus would be crucial. Stakeholders should work in coordination while fully respecting humanitarian principles in the provision of assistance and in full compliance with their respective mandates and objectives.

44. **Ms. Moruke** (South Africa) expressed concern at the negative treatment experienced by African nationals and people of African descent at the borders of Ukraine and urged European countries to resolve the situation to allow their safe passage during the conflict.

45. UNHCR's work in the Southern Africa region continued to strengthen the protection of persons of concern to the organization. Her Government viewed the regularization of refugees as a way to prevent trafficking in persons, gender-based violence and labour exploitation; it had therefore worked with UNHCR to address its backlog of asylum applications and was making progress in the documentation and registration of persons of concern to UNHCR to secure their access to state-provided services. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated existing inequalities within and between countries and had caused many refugees to lose their sources of income. Refugees must therefore be integrated into national immunization programmes to ensure their protection. She expressed appreciation for a recent visit to her country by the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, which had resulted in an agreement to cooperate further on matters relating to the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Refugee Forum. Her Government would also work more closely with SADC to support its efforts to address the displacement of persons in the region.

46. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) welcomed the efforts made by UNHCR to work with countries in the region to prevent statelessness, including through the issuance of birth certificates, and encouraged countries to implement all statelessness pledges in the coming year. He supported the resumption of refugee status decisions and the elimination of asylum application backlogs, and called on countries hosting refugees to resume the issuance and renewal of documentation for refugees.

47. The violence in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the targeting of camps of internally displaced persons, continued to drive internal and external displacement. She praised UNHCR's leadership on protection, shelter and camp coordination and camp management as well as its investment in community-based protection and monitoring, which had improved the identification of needs and responses for internally displaced persons and refugees. His Government was proud to provide financial support to UNHCR's work with refugees from the Central African Republic and was also supporting its efforts to assist refugees from the Central African Republic and Burundi and to repatriate and reintegrate refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo displaced in Zambia. His Government would also be expanding its refugee resettlement opportunities in the coming year. He noted with satisfaction the reduction in violence in Cabo Delgado and encouraged UNHCR to continue its critical protection work there, including by providing documentation support and legal assistance.

48. UNHCR should continue to respond to gender-based violence, support survivor-centred responses in partnership with regional governments and other stakeholders and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse within the organization and in humanitarian responses. He also supported UNHCR's efforts to help refugees become self-reliant. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies in Southern Africa, donors must not abandon the region and its refugee populations. His Government would continue to provide unearmarked support to UNHCR to meet needs as they arose.

49. **Mr. Senders** (Germany), speaking via video link, expressed concern at the dire situation of internally displaced persons in Mozambique in the light of the deteriorating security situation and protection offered at dedicated sites. His Government was actively coordinating efforts to improve access for humanitarian partners to the area and would continue to welcome open discussions on the matter.

50. **Mr. Mudyawabikwa** (Zimbabwe) noted the initiatives being pursued in the subregion under UNHCR and SADC's five-year joint action plan (2020–2024). At a meeting in January 2022, attended by the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection and government ministers of the Community, agreement had been reached on the centrality of self-reliance in refugee programming. He noted that refugees had been included in the national vaccination programme in Zimbabwe, and said that refugees in Zimbabwe were issued with a two-year renewable identity permit. His Government remained committed to its 2019 pledge to reduce statelessness by 2024 and to give effect to the provisions of the Global Compact on Refugees.

51. **Ms. Moussa** (Egypt) emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of displacement and refugee crises in Africa, and finding solutions in those areas. She welcomed UNHCR's continued engagement with the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development. She recognized the growing impact of climate change on displacement in Africa, including as a result of climate-induced natural disasters and the threat to the security of food, water and livelihoods. The World Bank had estimated that by 2050, 86 million people would be displaced due to climate change in sub-Saharan Africa, and the World Meteorological Organization had stated that 80 per cent of climate change impacts were manifested through water in the form of drought, flooding or water scarcity. A comprehensive and integrated approach to the drivers and root causes of climate-induced displacement was required, which was not limited to providing humanitarian assistance after such displacement, but also included anticipatory action and preparedness on the basis of reliable scientific evidence, forecasting and data gathering and exchange. She therefore asked UNHCR to provide an update on its work in data analytics. Investment should be made in the prevention of and early action on climate change, including through accelerating climate action, reducing risks, enhancing resilience, and building adaptive capacities, which would also require a means of implementation and adequate financing. There should be a shift from pledges to delivery and implementation through timely and holistic actions at scale, balanced between adaptation and mitigation. Her Government was committed to addressing the priorities of the African region under its presidency of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, 2022 (COP 27).

52. **Mr. Ishida** (Japan) said that his Government prioritized assistance based on the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. In that regard, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had provided reintegration assistance for returnees and returning internally displaced persons in Zambia. Furthermore, His Government had pledged \$4.3 million for countries in Southern

Africa and would continue to support African-led development through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

53. **Mr. Tapsoba** (Director, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, UNHCR), welcoming the valuable comments made on the programmes carried out in the subregion, said that efforts had been made to address vaccine hesitancy by engaging community and religious leaders as ambassadors for the COVID-19 vaccination programme; working with governments and local ministries to actively promote vaccination and ensure that accessing vaccination points did not require long-distance travel; working with community leaders to set monthly vaccination targets and to provide feedback on achievements in that regard; and engaging community health and water, sanitation and hygiene workers in advocacy activities. The Regional Bureau held regular all-staff meetings to provide updates on the COVID-19 situation and vaccine coverage, and continued to provide counselling services. UNHCR was also considering how to address vaccine availability, particularly in middle-income African countries that were not benefiting from the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility and in countries where the poor road infrastructure did not allow for the distribution of vaccines.

54. UNHCR was strengthening its efforts in the subregion to ensure protection of persons of concern; enhance case management capacity; and continue to monitor and analyse protection incidents. He noted that 67,800 protection incidents had been reported in four eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNHCR had advocated for the centrality of protection in all interventions relating to internally displaced persons, using monitoring data to reinforce its advocacy. UNHCR had also strengthened protection monitoring in refugee settings. It ensured that communities were able to have their concerns heard in an age-, gender- and diversity-sensitive way..

55. Gender-based violence remained a major concern for many of UNHCR's operations. Community mechanisms had been reinforced in order to prevent gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, and to enforce those activities. Additionally, the UNHCR Global Learning and Development Centre had initiated a regional risk mitigation learning event. As a result, the Government of Mozambique had mainstreamed risk mitigation and was actively supporting activities to combat gender-based violence under the protection cluster. Highlighting the Safe from the Start project, he recognized that there were still gaps in some responses to internally displaced persons, including the need to establish gender-based violence mechanisms in camps for internally displaced persons.

56. He echoed the concerns expressed regarding security in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The impact of the decision to phase out the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of The Congo in some areas was particularly worrying, and could affect the ability of United Nations or other humanitarian workers to access refugees and internally displaced persons. More troops were required in order to strengthen security measures in camps for internally displaced persons in that country and he called for a greater commitment from authorities to protect aid and ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers.

57. Turning to the situation in Mozambique, he said that the ongoing armed conflict had resulted in large numbers of internally displaced persons. Despite some improvement in Cabo Delgado Province following the intervention by SADC forces in July 2021, violence had quickly spilled into neighbouring provinces. UNHCR had scaled up its operational footprint and was working with partners and the Government to increase protection services and provide assistance to those affected. UNHCR continued to lead the protection cluster at the national and subnational levels, and played a critical role in delivering shelter and enhancing the response through the camp coordination and camp management cluster.

58. It was important to find peaceful solutions to put an end to the situations of conflict in Africa, in order to avoid more people becoming displaced. He welcomed the involvement of Member States at the subregional and continental levels in that regard. Moreover, he agreed that more needed to be done to mobilize additional resources in the subregion, and he said that UNHCR had expanded its fundraising efforts beyond traditional donors.

59. In conclusion, he said that while the situation in Ukraine was inevitably the focus of the world's attention, UNHCR's work around the world in other emergency situations would continue, and UNHCR would count on Member States' ongoing generosity and support to serve people forced to flee their homes and stateless persons.

b. Global programmes, inclusion and resilience (EC/73/SC/CRP.3)

60. **Mr. Malik** (Director, Division of Resilience and Solutions, UNHCR) said that the majority of refugees were hosted by low- and middle-income countries, and many found themselves in protracted displacement. Durable solutions remained elusive, and UNHCR would continue to work with host governments, bilateral and multilateral development partners to expand opportunities for refugees' inclusion, self-reliance and resilience in order to support social cohesion and contribute to the development of local economies.

61. The socioeconomic well-being of forcibly displaced persons had deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had also caused setbacks in the areas of health access, education, wages, employment and food security. Data released in 2021 had indicated that nearly half of all refugee children were out of school, and that participation in education at all levels was lower for refugee children. COVID-19 had disrupted education for all learners, but had had a disproportionate impact on displaced learners.

62. The Global Compact on Refugees had outlined a multi-stakeholder approach to better respond to refugee situations, and UNHCR had further strengthened its partnerships in that regard. Those included partnerships with the World Bank on policy, data, evidence, analytics, knowledge management and human resource development; the African Development Bank on including forced displacement in all activities to address fragility and build resilience; the Inter-American Development Bank through the newly signed memorandum of understanding on areas of collaboration; and other bilateral development partners. New partnerships had been initiated with Enabel – the Belgian Development Agency, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), and the development arm of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). UNHCR's partnership with the International Finance Corporation had the potential to significantly mobilize the private sector for strengthened investments in programmes related to forced displacement; a joint centre aimed at creating markets in forced displacement contexts by mobilizing private sector solutions would be launched in 2022. UNHCR had adhered to the OECD Development Assistance Committee recommendation on improving programming, finance and coordination in the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. In that regard, he highlighted the revitalized Joint Global Initiative between UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

63. Two innovative funding mechanisms had been launched in 2021; the Refugee Environmental Protection fund aimed to address the lack of clean and safe cooking fuel and the resulting widespread deforestation, and the Project Flow initiative would convert the energy source of water boreholes from diesel to solar power by 2030. Those initiatives were part of the Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability.

64. In 2021, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic had required considerable focus on the delivery of personal protective equipment, risk communication and community engagement. To benefit displaced persons and host communities, UNHCR had supported the strengthening of national health systems, including by establishing quarantine and treatment centres, and increasing intensive care and testing capacity. Refugees had been included in national COVID-19 vaccination plans in 162 host countries, but vaccine inequity remained a serious concern. UNHCR was working with the COVAX Facility, WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and had established delivery partnerships to access deep field locations.

65. UNHCR had also advocated for the inclusion of refugees in COVID-19 national education response plans to ensure that refugee children were not left behind. That included leveraging the digital landscape to support displaced learners, and he noted UNHCR's flagship partnership with the Vodaphone Foundation to provide students with access to digital learning. Additionally, UNHCR had launched the Refugee Connected Education Challenge, calling on governments and partners to make concrete commitments to help narrow the growing digital divide faced by displaced learners.

66. He highlighted UNHCR's expanded collaboration with WFP at the country and global levels, including through the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. The joint Call to Action aimed to develop country specific investment cases with governments and partners for achieving sustainable food security and socioeconomic inclusion. UNHCR's partnership with the International Labour Organization would seek to ensure inclusive market systems and key market opportunities for inclusion of refugees in their host communities.

67. Cash remained an efficient tool when responding to immediate life-saving needs, fostering resilience, and unlocking the potential for sustainable inclusion for persons of concern. In 2021, UNHCR had delivered \$ 670 million in cash in over 100 countries and more than 51 per cent of cash recipients were women.

68. The global situation remained precarious, with increased displacement across the world. The pandemic had created additional challenges for the forcibly displaced, exposing them to new health, protection and economic risks. UNHCR's global programmes had contributed to mitigating the consequences on persons of concern, strengthening their resilience and encouraging their inclusion in national systems. He thanked Member States for their continued support.

69. **Ms. Jahren** (Norway) commended UNHCR for delivering its programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and noted the Roadmap for inclusion of persons of concern in social protection systems (2022–2025). She commended the cooperation with the World Bank to support governments in the design of social protection projects under the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Replenishments of the International Development Association. She welcomed UNHCR's Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2021–2026 and its interventions in more than 100 countries, as cash enabled immediate life-saving responses, fostered resilience, and unlocked the potential for sustainable inclusion for persons of concern. She noted that the Grand Bargain Cash Coordination Caucus had unanimously endorsed a model setting out the structure, function, leadership, and resourcing of cash coordination. She commended UNHCR's efforts to accelerate learning initiatives to make up for learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, and asked for more information on the current situation, especially for girls. She recognized the launch of the Geneva Technical Hub and the Operational strategy for climate resilience and environmental sustainability 2022–2025. Highlighting UNHCR's important leadership role in the camp coordination and camp management cluster, she commended the approach to involve internally displaced persons in identifying solutions. Finally, she asked for more information on the implementation and follow-up of the UNHCR Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation and Response to Gender-based Violence, 2020

70. **Mr. Laukkanen** (Finland) noted that good progress had been made despite the uncertain context in which UNHCR had carried out its work. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on livelihoods and economic inclusion, and he commended UNHCR's efforts in that field. The Poverty Alleviation Coalition demonstrated a practical nexus-based approach, which increased self-reliance and the economic and social inclusion of poor refugees and host community members. Such best practices should be shared widely. Financial inclusion would facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the establishment of sustainable livelihoods. As only 25 per cent of persons of concern benefiting from cash assistance had access to suitable accounts, he asked what the key obstacles were to ensuring wider financial inclusion and what partnerships UNHCR was building in that regard. His Government supported the provision of cash assistance, when appropriate. However, there were several contexts in which that provision was especially challenging as a result of currency depreciation and high inflation and he commended UNHCR's efforts to find solutions. He expressed appreciation for UNHCR's increased collaboration with WFP, including the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub which would support greater refugee self-reliance in protracted settings. In light of the widening gap between humanitarian needs and available resources, he asked how UNHCR could build on the lessons learned through the Hub and what was hindering protection-sensitive targeting in countries not supported by the Hub. He noted with appreciation that UNHCR was intensifying its efforts on mental health and psychosocial support, recognizing the increased risk of gender-based violence resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

71. **Ms. Rasmussen** (Denmark) recognized the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and commended the work of the UNHCR over the previous year, in particular to strengthen livelihoods, opportunities and economic inclusion of refugees in host communities and enhance refugees' self-reliance and resilience. Noting the benefit of a nexus-based approach, she welcomed

the close cooperation with the World Bank, International Finance Corporation and UNDP. UNHCR should deepen collaboration with other development actors. She welcomed efforts to create innovative financing mechanisms to scale up climate action. She emphasized the need to remain focused on addressing sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in light of the rise in such violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and commended UNHCR for its activities as part of the shelter response and its advocacy during the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence. Gender-based violence should be considered as a cross-cutting issue, with particular regard to health services.

72. **Ms. Nels** (United Kingdom) said that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have an impact across the world, especially in the lives of persons of concern. She commended UNHCR's activities to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the forcibly displaced and their host countries. She asked UNHCR to clarify the concept of "persons of concern", in order to identify who was being reached and how, and to consider which groups may be excluded on the basis of gender, age, disability, religious belief or ethnicity. She asked what had prevented UNHCR from reaching those people and from involving them in the decisions that directly impacted their safety, security and resilience. She asked how UNHCR had reached the most marginalized people with cash assistance, how that had resulted in sustainable inclusion for persons of concern, and how sustainable inclusion was being measured. She commended efforts to address the environmental aspects of humanitarian response, including greening standard emergency shelter items, and noted that best practices had been shared with other agencies. UNHCR contributions in leading national shelter clusters and appointing experts in the global shelter cluster should be applauded. Under the camp coordination and camp management cluster, she noted that, while the area-based approach had produced quality multisectoral programmatic outcomes supported by large agencies, UNHCR must avoid side-lining specialist agencies. Finally, with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene, she encouraged UNHCR to emphasize its role in supporting development actors and international financial institutions to operate in crisis situations, share the burden of resilience programming and take practical steps to integrate their planning with that of humanitarian actors.

73. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) commended UNHCR's continued delivery of life-saving programmes during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its focus on strengthening self-reliance and advocating for the inclusion of displaced populations in national service strategies. In that regard, he welcomed the Roadmap for inclusion of persons of concern in social protection systems (2022–2025). While the global COVID-19 vaccine rollout had been challenging, she noted that refugees had been included in national vaccination plans in 162 countries, and she commended the effective advocacy of UNHCR. Recognizing the success thus far, she looked forward to the continued implementation of UNHCR's Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2021-2026 and encouraged UNHCR to study the impact of cash on promoting inclusion and sustainable access to local services. He looked forward to the adoption by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the cash coordination plan developed by the Cash Coordination Caucus, and encouraged UNHCR to work with other stakeholders to implement the plan and to establish the cash advisory group. He noted that the Educate a Child initiative had enabled access to education for out-of-school children at the primary school level across several regions. Increasing digital inclusion of refugees in education, including through the launch of the Refugee Connected Education Challenge, was critical for avoiding learning gaps. He encouraged greater coordination among United Nations agencies, particularly on nutrition and food security; child wasting in forcibly displaced populations was a grave concern. His Government supported the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub to further enhance collaboration between UNHCR and WFP. Finally, he welcomed all efforts to reduce or mitigate the potential harmful environmental impacts of humanitarian activities and took note of the Operational strategy for climate resilience and environmental sustainability (2022-2025), which would ease tensions over natural resources and facilitate resilience.

74. **Mr. Banzet** (Canada) thanked UNHCR for its advocacy efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate the consequences for persons of concern and host communities. UNHCR should continue to mainstream gender-responsive humanitarian action at the field level and he encouraged UNHCR to report on data disaggregated by sex and age at the global level, in addition to using them to enhance programming. He expressed concern regarding the growing severity of global food insecurity, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. He welcomed UNHCR's Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2021-2026 and efforts to scale up those activities, expressing his Government's support for cash-based assistance, as appropriate. He commended

efforts to develop a global model for cash coordination under the Grand Bargain Cash Coordination Caucus, which would facilitate the provision of more predictable, accountable and timely cash assistance. He commended UNHCR's continued leadership role in that regard.

75. **Mr. Senders** (Germany), speaking via video link, expressed appreciation for UNHCR's continued efforts to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on displaced persons. He expressed support for UNHCR's efforts to mainstream mental health and psychosocial support across all its work. His Government would continue to work with UNHCR to ensure access to education for displaced populations, including under the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI). He commended efforts to advance inclusion and resilience of forcibly displaced persons. In the context of the Global Compact on Refugees, he highlighted the partnership between UNHCR and the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) on the operationalization of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus and on fostering the inclusion of refugees.

76. **Ms. Lehoux** (Switzerland), regarding education, said that her Government remained concerned about the situation of out-of-school refugee children and youth, which had been exacerbated by the pandemic, and welcomed the efforts by UNHCR to address the issue. The collaboration between the Swiss Government and UNHCR through the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies continued to bear fruit. Concerning energy and the environment, the Geneva Technical Hub established jointly by her Government and UNHCR in June 2021 was already starting to produce encouraging results. The Geneva Technical Hub was playing an active role in the response to the Ukraine situation, thus demonstrating its relevance. Her Government was convinced that the Geneva Technical Hub could provide support for a greater number of countries in which UNHCR operated. She welcomed the launch of UNHCR's Operational Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability, and noted with appreciation the emphasis placed on participatory approaches and gender-related aspects.

77. **Mr. Malik** (Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions, UNHCR) welcomed the support highlighted and had acknowledged the advice provided in the comments and observations. On social protection, robust progress was being made, with a number of regions in Africa and in Europe having been examined. Prior to the Ukraine crisis, several important social protection initiatives in Europe had been documented. It was extremely important for inclusion to be ensured at all levels in Europe. However, refugees in other parts of the globe who were equally in need of support and assistance should not be forgotten. UNHCR was working with the World Bank on social protection to ensure that the UNHCR Strategic Roadmap for Inclusion in Social Protection Systems was also taken on board by development actors.

78. On socioeconomic inclusion, specifically with regard to the Poverty Alleviation Coalition, UNHCR was now working in 20 countries with 13 non-governmental organizations, and around 60,000 refugees had already started to benefit from the initiative. Concerning the Cash Coordination Caucus, the recommendations had been taken into consideration and implementation was under way at the global level, with country operations engaged. Regarding education, he noted with appreciation that the governments of Denmark and Czechia had joined the Government of Germany in the DAFI scholarship programme, which aimed to achieve 15 per cent enrolment of young refugees in tertiary education by 2030. However, support from partners was also needed with regard to primary and secondary education. Ensuring continued education for refugee children during the pandemic had been challenging, with girls affected the most. Connectivity in remote areas had been a major issue for most regions, and some innovative approaches had been tried and tested. UNHCR was reaching out to communities and elders and working closely with partners, governments and UNICEF to address the matter. The UNHCR-WFP Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub was yielding positive results, and the lessons learned were being replicated elsewhere. The support received through the Geneva Technical Hub was much appreciated, and the team for the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies was being strengthened to increase collaboration with the rest of the partners there.

79. **Mr. Mazou** (Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, UNHCR) said that he had had the opportunity to meet with many colleagues and partners around the world in the past year and had witnessed the true meaning of staying and delivering in the context of the pandemic, which had sometimes entailed security risks. In that regard, UNHCR continued to strengthen its staff safety management systems in close coordination with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security. He called on all States to help ensure the security and safety of all humanitarian workers

around the world. The significant outflow from Ukraine that was being witnessed was a reminder of the growing number of forcibly displaced persons across the globe, whether refugees or internally displaced persons.

80. UNHCR continued to strengthen its preparedness and emergency response capacity to ensure that all those forced to flee received the assistance that they required. He highlighted the devastating impact of food ration cuts on the well-being, health and protection of refugees. He also acknowledged the emphasis placed by delegations of countries receiving large numbers of refugees on the need for new approaches to finding solutions, and recalled that the Syrian refugee situation, which was the largest in the world, had been ongoing for 11 years. However, it was comforting to know, for example, that 65,000 Burundians had been able to return to their place of origin in 2021. He noted the repeated references to the need to address vaccine inequity around the world, and commended the countries that had systematically included refugees in their vaccination programmes. Ensuring adequate coverage by the end of 2022 would be a key objective for all.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

81. **Mr. Boutadghart** (Morocco) condemned the attempts at defamation and pretensions made by the Algerian delegate in order to use the meeting for political goals. The Algerian Government had said that the refugee camps represented extra costs and were a heavy burden for the country, but at the same time was avoiding the provision of assistance for refugees. The Algerian Government was standing by its policy of exploitation to exert pressure on the international community to serve its own political agenda and interests. He condemned the Algerian Government for creating obstacles to solutions for the Western Sahara situation. The inhabitants of the camps were living in inhumane conditions, which had been exacerbated by the pandemic, and the hindrance of attempts to provide assistance to the inhabitants, who had been isolated for over 45 years, was further aggravating the situation. The human rights of the refugees inside the camps were being violated, particularly those of women and of children, who were being used as military recruits. The management of the camps was being delegated to separatists, and the camps were being militarized, which was in complete contradiction with international conventions on refugees. His delegation wished to pursue essential constructive dialogue to reach consensus on humanitarian matters requiring attention within a very complex international environment. It could not remain silent in the face of all the lies and an illegitimate regime that spared no effort to exacerbate internal crises by supporting external conflicts and encouraging separatism, actions which would continue to threaten the security of the region and prevent refugees from living in dignity.

82. **Ms. Vorontsova** (Russian Federation) urged delegates to remain focused on the humanitarian issue in Ukraine, highlighting that other international forums existed in which political opinions could be voiced.

83. Turning to the humanitarian situation, she said that Russian forces did not pose a threat to civilians, and were not attacking civilian infrastructure. The Russian Government was working to open humanitarian corridors in order to save citizens in dire humanitarian conditions. To allow for the departure of civilians and foreign nationals being forcibly held by Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy and Mariupol, humanitarian corridors were being opened. The Russian Government had tried to plan safe routes for humanitarian corridors, and information had been provided to the authorities in Kiev, and to embassies, the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organizations.

84. Unfortunately, owing to the action of Ukrainian authorities, the operation to evacuate peaceful citizens was not yielding results. As of 9 March 2022, the Ukrainian side had agreed to only three out of ten humanitarian corridors offered by the Russian Government. The Russian Government had agreed to three additional humanitarian routes from Enerhodar, Volnovakha and Izyum, and had proposed them to the Ukrainian Government. The Ukrainian side was not taking steps to prepare humanitarian convoys, and the civil population was not being informed about the humanitarian corridors. She also noted that, under the threat of physical violence, citizens and foreign nationals had not been allowed to leave the aforementioned towns.

85. At present, the Russian Government, without the participation of the Ukrainian authorities, had evacuated almost 180,000 civilians, 45,000 of whom were children. Over two million additional people wished to be evacuated to the Russian Federation from 2,000 towns in Ukraine.

86. As of 9 March 2022, the authorities in Kyiv were holding hostage as human shields over 1,500 foreign citizens who wanted to be evacuated. The Russian Government was working around the clock with diplomatic agencies to resolve that situation. Additionally, foreign nationals from many countries, including African nations, who were trying to leave Ukraine and enter Europe, were facing serious problems at the Ukrainian border.

87. The security of United Nations staff in Ukraine was one of the priorities for the Russian Government. Russian military forces had ensured that 180 United Nations staff could leave Ukraine, and support would continue to be provided. The Russian Government remained in constant contact with the United Nations Secretariat in that regard.

88. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) strongly rejected the comments that had been made by the Chinese delegate on the first day of the meeting, and upheld the United States delegation's earlier intervention. The United States Government remained committed to providing life-saving humanitarian assistance for the record number of forcibly displaced citizens globally and would continue to stand with its allies around the world in calling for an immediate end to the Chinese Government's persecution of minority groups, including Tibetans and Uighurs in Xinjiang.

89. **Mr. Chemakh** (Algeria) said that the ridiculous claims made by the representative of the Moroccan Government before the Committee reflected the growing hysteria of the Moroccan occupying authorities, who were masters of fake news and spreading of falsehoods. The positive image given by Saharawi refugees during the recent visit by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to the camps near Tindouf had skewed the calculations of the Moroccan expansionist regime and shattered its propaganda and lies. During his visit, Mr. de Mistura had been able to see the actual living conditions of the Saharawi refugees and their determination to uphold their inalienable right to independence. However, the visit had not included the occupied territories of Western Sahara, where Saharawi citizens were being subject to fierce repression and massive and premeditated violations of their human rights. No appropriate explanation had been provided for the incomplete visit, which indicated the incongruous, or at least artificial, nature of the biased account given by the representative of the Moroccan regime. It was precisely in order to prevent a fact-finding mission from being sent to the Saharawi territories that Morocco remained the only member of the African Union to not have ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The situation was compounded by the stubborn refusal of the Moroccan occupier to expand the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

90. The misguided attempts of the Moroccan regime to misuse the issue of registration to discredit the actions of UNHCR directed at Saharawi refugees reflected its underhanded desire to add another form of despair to the injustice of the forced exile inflicted on those refugees, by turning them into an object to be quantified with no prospect of a solution. The census on which the Moroccan Government was obsessively fixated was merely a technical element of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. The implementation of such a component would therefore only make sense if a referendum were effectively convened to allow the people of Western Sahara to exercise their legitimate and imprescriptible right to self-determination. Regarding the other allegations made, including the alleged presence of child soldiers in Saharawi refugee camps, which had been categorically denied by the spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary-General, he invited Standing Committee to consult the fact sheet sent by the Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations in Geneva on 30 September 2021. The unwholesome attitude of the Moroccan occupier would only increase the determination of his country to strengthen its solidarity with the Saharawi refugees and bolster its unwavering support for their just cause.

91. **Ms. Shao** (China) said that her Government believed that misinformation had been spread due to political reasons, with the intention of discrediting China; it completely disagreed with and disapproved of such actions. The Chinese Government adhered to a people-centred approach and strived to provide its population with decent living conditions, and ensured all levels of human rights protection. Therefore, any matters related to Tibet or Xinjiang were not human rights issues. At present, Xinjiang and Tibet were very stable and the people there were happy. All persons of

ethnicity enjoyed freedom and prosperity. Certain countries had fabricated lies to tarnish the image of and destabilize China in order to curb its development, but they would not succeed in their intentions. Many issues related to human rights, xenophobia and racism existed in the United States, including the violation of migrants' rights. Her Government objected to the ill intentions and deeds of the countries spreading the aforementioned misinformation.

92. **Mr. Jievaltas** (Lithuania), in response to the right of reply statement made by the Russian delegate, said that his Government had the utmost respect for the governmental nature of the Standing Committee. However, the members of the Executive Committee had not only committed themselves to assisting and protecting refugees, but had also pledged their devotion to resolving refugee issues. Those were the main criteria for becoming members of the body. Members had an obligation to address and discuss the root causes of forced displacement. At present, over two million refugees had fled to Europe from Ukraine, and many more Ukrainians had been displaced trying to seek shelter from attacks inside the country. There was only one cause of the situation, and that was the unprovoked military attack and invasion of the sovereign country of Ukraine by the Russian Government. Only one solution to the ongoing refugee crisis existed, which was for the Russian Government to stop the aggression.

93. Concerning the narrative by the Russian Government about matters such as politicization, he advised Russian representatives not to doubt the ability of the UNHCR and its Member States to distinguish truth from lies. The outcome of the United Nations General Assembly one week earlier had been crystal clear about the party that bore the responsibility, and the absolute majority of statements delivered in the Standing Committee the previous day had indicated the same. There was no justification for indiscriminate attacks against civilians. The fundamental principles of international humanitarian law must be respected, safe passage must be ensured for civilians to leave conflict areas, and humanitarian aid must be enabled and facilitated to reach people in need. Such principles were non-negotiable and must be respected. The world was watching.

Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

a. UNHCR's programme in the United Nations proposed framework for 2023 (EC/73/SC/CRP.4)

94. **Ms. Shroff** (Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results, UNHCR), introducing the report to be discussed, recalled that, under article 20 of the Statute of UNHCR, the United Nations regular programme budget funded a small portion of UNHCR's management and administration costs. Such expenditure was used to perform key functions in executive direction, management, finance and oversight at headquarters and, to a limited extent, through the regional bureaux. With the expanding needs of the people served by UNHCR across the globe, its budget and expenditure had grown, and its management and administration costs had also increased over the past decade. However, UNHCR had demonstrated effectiveness in containing management and administration expenditure, which represented approximately or less than 5 per cent of total expenditure. To receive the resources from the United Nations regular programme budget, UNHCR prepared submissions as part of the general processes led by the Office of the Secretary-General in New York. The document to be discussed was an advance copy of those submissions.

95. UNHCR's functions related to management and administration were critical to ensuring that the Organization continued to be effective and high-performing, and be able to respond rapidly even in fast and dramatic contexts. In 2021, despite the global pandemic, 50 new emergency responses had been activated in five regions, including in Afghanistan and Northern Europe, enabling UNHCR to deliver protection, assistance and solutions to forcibly displaced and stateless people. Specifically, UNHCR had deployed expert emergency personnel swiftly in spite of travel restrictions, contributed to improved access to protection and assistance through access to asylum, supported Member States to establish or expand resettlement programmes, made advances towards more predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, and strengthened engagement with United Nations agencies, national and international non-governmental organizations and donors towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNHCR had reached an all-time record level of expenditure in 2021. Provisional data indicated a 25 per cent implementation rate. UNHCR continued to meet its Grand Bargain commitments to strengthen its delivery through local partners. Approximately \$1.2 billion had been disbursed through local, national and international non-

governmental organizations, of which \$751 million had been provided to over 950 local and national responders, constituting the highest number of local and national partners having received funding from UNHCR to date. Effective partner management, ongoing partner reforms, close engagement in the inter-agency and operational environment with all partners, sound oversight, sound people and partner management all helped UNHCR to deliver more efficiently.

96. Regarding UNHCR's business transformations as part of the reforms and changes made, in the area of resource management, UNHCR had shifted to a data-driven risk-managed resource allocation process, had introduced measures to increase operational flexibility and through the efforts of regional bureaux, had prioritized and identified needs more swiftly to optimize and target resource allocation. Such shifts also increased UNHCR's efficiency, enabling it to focus its resources where they were most needed and to manage its budget to make optimal use of funds. Concerning 2022 and beyond, UNHCR would continue to streamline and optimize systems and processes to enable it to work with greater agility and effectiveness. Valuable lessons learned from the pandemic in recent years were being carried forward.

97. On the processes of budget submission and approval, the cycles for submissions for the United Nations regular programme budget led by entities in New York, and the annual programme budget led by entities in Geneva and approved by the Executive Committee, did somewhat run in parallel. The preparation for the United Nations programme budget for 2023 had started in late 2021 and was currently being completed. The programme content would then be reviewed by the United Nations Committee for Programme and Coordination, and approved by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. The preparation of UNHCR's annual programme budget was currently ongoing and would be completed by the end of July 2022, with approval by the Executive Committee in October 2022.

98. In resolution 59/276, the General Assembly had recommended a level of United Nations regular budget funding of approximately 50 per cent of UNHCR's management and administrative costs, specifying that the percentage did not represent a ceiling. Nonetheless, the share of management and administration costs funded from the regular budget had decreased over the years. In 2022, the share was projected at 21.5 per cent, less than half the recommended level. To make up for the gap in regular budget funding, UNHCR drew financing from its voluntary contributions which would otherwise be used to provide funding to its programmatic activities. She called for strengthened collaboration and support to ensure that United Nations regular budget funding could continue to meet UNHCR's needs to enable UNHCR to carry on using its resources optimally.

99. **Mr. Choon** (Australia) said that his Government strongly supported UNHCR's proposed focus on lessons learned from the COVID-19 response to lessen the impact of the pandemic on displaced persons. Maintaining a focus on the most vulnerable would be key to ending the pandemic. He encouraged all governments to include refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and persons living in conflict settings in their national COVID-19 vaccination plans. Looking ahead to the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023, his Government was pleased to see that UNHCR's strategy for 2023 would include increasing efforts to expand responsibility-sharing and following up on pledges made at the first Global Refugee Forum. It endorsed strategies to expand complementary pathways for refugee admission and, as a member of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, was pleased to support global efforts to increase refugee access to protection through labour complementary pathways. He commended UNHCR's planned focus for 2023 on measures to ensure that no one was left behind, and urged UNHCR to continue its focus on gender mainstreaming. It was vital to implement UNHCR's action plan for disability inclusion for 2020–2024.

100. **Mr. Van Mens** (Netherlands) expressed strong support for the 2022–2023 workplan, and its particular emphasis on partnerships and sustained commitment to the Grand Bargain. The stronger risk-based approach through project monitoring was also welcome. He wished to know how the programme budget for the current year had been influenced by the lessons learned through UNHCR's evaluation survey, in particular by the evaluations on development cooperation, capacity development, voluntary repatriation and integration. He also wished to know more on the expected impact of the phasing-out of evaluations of UNHCR's programmes and whether the capacity for the evaluation service had been expanded to cover all activities with the same level of quality. His Government called on UNHCR to make available the means necessary to continuously expand and improve the evaluation capacity of UNHCR's programmes. It also wished to hear the opinion of

other audit evaluation bodies on the change. He urged UNHCR to provide documentation for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and other relevant bodies on time for their consideration and advice, so as to ensure opportune consideration by the full Standing Committee.

101. **Mr. Laukkanen** (Finland) expressed strong support for the proposed programme plan for 2023. UNHCR operated in a highly complex and unpredictable environment and deserved appreciation for its agility and effectiveness.

102. He welcomed the reference to disability inclusion in the plan, although he questioned why it had been included under the heading “External factors for 2023” when it should be at the core of the protection mandate. UNHCR’s commitment to its action plan for disability inclusion and its recent efforts to mainstream the issue were welcome. Efforts should be made to raise awareness throughout UNHCR and among its partners to ensure that policy objectives reached the operational level. It was imperative for persons with disabilities to have access to whatever services they needed and not to have to rely solely on targeted approaches, because without full accessibility they were, in practice, being denied services available to others. The war in Ukraine was a real test of disability inclusion and various organizations of persons with disabilities had already expressed concerns about the protection of persons with disabilities in the crisis. In that regard, he asked for details of how UNHCR was ensuring that persons with disabilities could access humanitarian assistance from the outset of emergencies.

103. **Mr. Banzet** (Canada) reiterated Canada’s strong support for UNHCR and recognized its efforts in responding to a variety of humanitarian protection needs over the past year. Canada supported the proposal to seek solutions that were non-discriminatory, inclusive and comprehensive, and took note of the draft programme for 2023. Canada looked forward to continuing to work in a collaborative manner, including through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the Asylum Capacity Support Group and the MIRPS Support Platform.

104. Resettlement was a vital area for tangible burden- and responsibility-sharing. As the current Chair of the Global Task Force on Refugee Labour Mobility, Canada encouraged more positive action to advance resettlement-related measures, in line with the third objective of the Global Compact on Refugees.

105. **Ms. Nelson** (United Kingdom) commended UNHCR for its continued efforts in the face of the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its commitment to maintaining special measures, such as increased flexibility towards partners. She further applauded UNHCR for embedding the principles of the Global Compact on Refugees throughout its activities. The United Kingdom remained committed to supporting refugees and the countries and communities that hosted them.

106. The United Kingdom supported the objective and strategy set out in the draft programme and welcomed the focus on multi-stakeholder approaches, partnerships and participation. The commitments on inclusion, in particular with regard to gender equality, the prevention of gender-based violence, the focus on mental health and psychosocial support and disability inclusion, were especially welcome.

107. The success of UNHCR’s transformation plans in recent years was to be commended and plans were welcome for evaluations of the regionalization and decentralization process, as well as of development partnerships, solutions and disengagement strategies, and country-strategy evaluations, as the Assessment of the Environmental Implications of Various Energy Systems (COMPASS) continued to be rolled out.

108. **Ms. Shroff** (Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results, UNHCR), responding to the questions that had been raised, thanked members of the Committee for their positive comments about the extent to which a focus on disability inclusion had been included. Indeed, disability inclusion was very much part and parcel of the work of UNHCR. The policy on age, gender and diversity mainstreaming was at the foundation of all programmatic work and had core actions to ensure that such considerations were integrated into all aspects of strategic planning, strategic thinking, implementation, operational delivery, assistance and protection, from needs assessment and situation analysis work all the way through detailed planning to engagement with partners that delivered. There was a twin-track approach to disability inclusion: firstly to ensure delivery of

targeted interventions; and secondly to ensure that people with a disability could access UNHCR's services more broadly. A group chaired by the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection looked at reporting and progress in that area and would be able to provide further information upon request.

109. The evaluation work that had been done over the past several years had formed an integral part of the Organization's strategic thinking. For example, once the evaluation on statelessness had been completed, the findings had been reviewed by a large number of people at Headquarters and in the bureaux to identify specific actions, operations, budgets, inputs and possible results in order to achieve change. Of course, it took a while for evaluation findings to be translated into activities on the ground, so they should be looked at as a 3–5 year process involving concrete planning, working very closely with the relevant senior executives and directors. With COMPASS, evaluation was being integrated into the planning, monitoring and reporting work much more closely.

110. UNHCR had been working with the Secretariat of ACABQ and expected the process to run more smoothly in the coming year.

111. **The Chairperson** took it that the Standing Committee wished to adopt the draft decision on UNHCR's draft programme in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for 2023, contained in annex II of document EC/73/SC/CRP.4.

112. *It was so decided.*

b. UNHCR financial regulations and rules (EC/73/SC/CRP.5 and EC/73/SC/CRP.5/Add.1)

113. **Mr. Baritt** (Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, UNHCR), accompanying her statement by a slide presentation, introduced the document on UNHCR financial regulations and rules (EC/73/SC/CRP.5) and presented an overview of the ongoing process to seek authorization from the United Nations General Assembly for UNHCR to establish its own financial regulations, as well as an update on the drafting process.

114. He recalled that the aim was to create an integrated set of financial regulations and rules for UNHCR, which was the only large United Nations agency that did not yet have its own regulations and rules. Those integrated regulations would provide a solid foundation for the financial policy governance framework of the Organization.

115. After being established in 1950, UNHCR had received authorization to have its own rules in 1957. With the Organization currently going through the Business Transformation Programme, there was a unique opportunity to develop a set of regulations while the systems, processes and policies were all being redesigned. If the new regulations were not in place before those systems went live in 2023, all the policy cross-referencing would have to be done on the basis of the existing United Nations regulations. That process could not be changed halfway through.

116. Almost all agencies had a document combining their regulations and rules, since the two were complementary and were better read together. However, since UNHCR used the United Nations regulations, all finance staff across the Organization had to be instructed to ignore the rules contained in the same document as the regulations, since they did not pertain to UNHCR. Almost half of the United Nations regulations related to assessed contributions, peacekeeping, appropriations and the unique funding structure of the United Nations Secretariat, which did not apply to UNHCR either. In its own regulations, UNHCR would propose to delete those paragraphs. There would be minimal or no changes to most other regulations, just moderate changes to some paragraphs. The proposed draft regulations were contained in the annex to the conference paper.

117. With regard to the timeline, he recalled that in October 2021, the Executive Committee had approved the request to seek authority from the General Assembly for UNHCR to have its own regulations. A paper was then drawn up for the General Assembly providing all the relevant background information, including the Business Transformation Programme giving a sense of urgency, and highlighting all the other agencies that had their own regulations, in particular UNICEF, which was the most relevant example as it had gone through exactly the same process in 1985.

118. The document had been taken up by ACABQ in February, which had issued its report the previous week, recommending against the proposal. That was obviously disappointing, but there was still some hope, as the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee) of the General Assembly would be meeting in mid-March to discuss it. However, if the Fifth Committee agreed with the ACABQ recommendation, then that would most likely be the end of the matter. So members of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management had spent the past few days in New York meeting as many delegates from the Fifth Committee as they could, to try to understand their concerns and address their questions. He urged members of the Standing Committee to also speak to their counterparts on the Fifth Committee if they had not already done so. Members of the Division would be very happy to attend such discussions to help answer any questions.

119. The ACABQ observations contained several key issues. Firstly, they found that the request had no clear operational urgency. Indeed, the Executive Committee's decision had not highlighted that, however, the General Assembly paper had done so. ACABQ did acknowledge that there was a need for UNHCR to have tailored financial regulations, which was good news, but they were concerned that approving the request might lead to a proliferation of others, which could result in further inconsistencies across the United Nations system. However, UNHCR was the only large agency not to have its own regulations. The only others that did not had much smaller budgets, so proliferation was unlikely to be much of an issue. With regards to the question of inconsistencies, different regulations were often cited as a reason not to be able to "work as one" at field level. However, most of the regulations dealt with very high-level concepts. Only two dealt with procurement, both providing guiding principles. Nothing in those regulations prevented working as one. Indeed, in 2006, a United Nations working group had been established to try to harmonize the regulations, but in the end they finished their work without issuing the very long document that they had drawn up, as they did not find it to be useful.

120. One thing that was beneficial to working as one was working with the Business Innovation Group and the United Nations Development Coordination Office, looking at using common premises and common service centres. Indeed, an existing signed statement of mutual recognition was being used on a daily basis in hiring and procurement, which was saving money. There was therefore no issue at the regulation level.

121. The drafting process for the UNHCR regulations was already under way, to enable as much consultation with members as possible. Indeed, there had already been a question and answer session; he thanked members for participating in the session, as well as those who had followed up bilaterally with comments and suggestions. The draft regulations were becoming stronger by the day. Any remaining comments or questions should be submitted in the coming week, so that a second draft could be issued incorporating the comments, if approval was received from the Fifth Committee. A final draft would then be ready by August, in time to be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval in October. On that schedule, the new regulations would enter into force on 1 January 2023, giving enough time to define new training programmes and policies before the new financial systems went live.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.