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Summary record of the 680th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 1 October 2014, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Staur (Vice-Chairperson)..... (Denmark)

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

Statement by the High Commissioner and general debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Hajnoczi** (Austria) said that Austria fully supported the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to protect and improve the lives of refugees and other persons of concern. Austria had a long tradition of hosting refugees and had granted international protection to 52,000 people over the previous decade. In view of recent developments in the northern regions of the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, Austria had provided UNHCR with financial assistance amounting to €1 million. However, it was not enough simply to provide immediate humanitarian assistance. It was also necessary to build the capacity of the affected regions to offer relief and protection to those people who had little prospect of returning to their homes. Austria supported the Regional Protection Programmes developed by the European Union. Resettlement programmes could offer a viable solution to refugees in particularly vulnerable situations and could prevent them from falling prey to human traffickers. Austria had launched such a programme in cooperation with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), under which it planned to welcome 1,500 Syrian refugees and grant them permanent protection. The refugees who had already arrived in Austria could benefit from a variety of support measures aimed at facilitating their integration into Austrian society.

2. Another cause for concern was the increased incidence of sexual and gender-based violence in many conflict situations. Austria encouraged UNHCR to continue its awareness-raising activities in that area. Strategies to prevent sexual and gender-based violence should be an integral part of all protection efforts in conflict situations. It was also important to increase the participation of refugee women in all decision-making processes concerning them. The competent authorities had recently reviewed the country's reservations to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and had concluded that some of them should be withdrawn. A bill was currently being drafted to that end.

3. **Mr. Zolfaghari** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Islamic Republic of Iran had hosted and protected more than 3 million displaced persons. Moreover, the current insecurity in the region had led a large number of foreign nationals to seek refuge in the country. The Islamic Republic of Iran currently spent more on meeting the basic needs of refugees than it received from donor countries. The literacy rate of Afghan refugees had risen from 6 per cent to 67 per cent; 15,000 refugees had graduated from university; and 220,000 refugees were covered by health insurance. The vast majority of refugees lived in urban areas and only 3 per cent of them lived in settlements. The Islamic Republic of Iran considered voluntary repatriation to be the most appropriate solution to the refugee situation in the country. However, Afghan refugees often lacked incentives to return and, even if they did, their reintegration into Afghan society was unlikely to be sustainable. It was therefore necessary to overhaul policies on repatriation to remedy that situation. The creation of employment and educational opportunities and guaranteeing the availability of adequate health care in Afghanistan would undoubtedly expedite the repatriation of Afghan refugees. The international community should assist both the country of origin and the host country in creating the conditions necessary for the return of refugees.

4. Only 2,500 refugees had been resettled in a third country through resettlement programmes in operation in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The countries receiving refugees under such programmes should increase their admission quotas in order to expedite the resettlement process. It was hoped that the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries would promote cooperation among host countries with a view to resolving the Afghan refugee situation. In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran

had devised a number of projects in conjunction with UNHCR and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to carry forward the work of the Conference.

5. **Mr. Niemtchinow** (France) said that it was time to reflect on humanitarian response mechanisms in the run-up to the next World Humanitarian Summit. Political will was needed to preserve humanitarian space. States were responsible for guaranteeing humanitarian workers free and rapid access to populations of concern. When it was safe to do so, humanitarian agencies should intervene rapidly to assist those in need. Priority should be given to preventing gender-based violence, as women and children were often the first victims of a humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, UNHCR should work with partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to guarantee access to primary and secondary education for all children affected by humanitarian crises. There was also a pressing need to identify new donors, as the financial resources provided by traditional donors were no longer sufficient. While States should provide most of the additional funding required, UNHCR should also identify and develop partnerships with donors in the private sector and other non-traditional donors. It was also necessary to devise a crisis response mechanism that would enable development partners to make an earlier start in implementing activities aimed at stabilizing country situations.

6. **Ms. Southern** (Australia) commended the generosity of countries of first asylum across the globe and the efforts of UNHCR and the other humanitarian agencies providing assistance to those fleeing the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Many of those who had fled their homeland could never return and it was the responsibility of the international community to ensure the safety of those who had been permanently displaced. However, the burden of resettling refugees and displaced persons should not be restricted to a small group of wealthy countries. It was imperative that countries with established resettlement programmes should assist other countries wishing to set up such programmes.

7. Since 1947, Australia had welcomed more than 800,000 refugees and persons in need and remained one of the top three resettlement countries in the world. Of the 11,000 places available under Australia's offshore resettlement programme, 4,400 were reserved for refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Australia had a range of policies designed to support the orderly movement of people to its national territory and through the region. Its strict asylum policy protected the country from people smuggling and had yielded a significant humanitarian dividend. Australia had also established partnerships aimed at building the resettlement capacity of other countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

8. **Mr. Getahun** (Ethiopia) said that, as the country with the largest refugee intake in Africa, Ethiopia continued to open its borders to people in need. More refugees were arriving in Ethiopia on a daily basis from South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. Ethiopia was currently hosting nearly 250,000 South Sudanese refugees in refugee camps. The inhabitants of two refugee camps made uninhabitable by severe flooding in the region were being temporarily accommodated in local host communities. The provision of adequate humanitarian assistance in the Sudan would stem the flow of refugees to Ethiopia. Ethiopia also hosted nearly 250,000 Somali refugees and was working with the Government of Somalia and UNHCR to give effect to the Addis Ababa Commitment towards Somali Refugees. Affording refugees access to vocational training and income-generating activities would help to resolve the country's refugee situation. The international community should share host countries' refugee burden.

9. **Mr. Çarıkçı** (Turkey) said that Turkey continued to keep its borders open to Syrian refugees. More than 220,000 Syrians were currently registered in 22 shelters in Turkey. The Government of Turkey met all the needs of those living in such shelters and provided basic services, such as health care, for Syrian refugees living in towns. It was estimated that more than 1.5 million Syrians were currently living in Turkey. Turkey had also provided humanitarian assistance worth US\$ 300 million to the northern region of the Syrian Arab

Republic. Turkey was scheduled to receive US\$ 497 million in funding under the Syria Regional Response Plan but to date had only received 25 per cent of that amount. Turkey had welcomed nearly 100,000 Iraqi refugees since the crisis in the country had begun and had provided assistance to internally displaced persons in Anbar Province. Turkey preferred to provide assistance to Iraqis in their own country in conjunction with the country's local and national authorities. Moreover, the Turkish authority responsible for disaster and emergency management was in contact with the Iraqi authorities with a view to building two refugee camps in Dohuk and Zakho.

10. **Mr. Alghunaim** (Observer for Kuwait) said that 10 per cent of all funds earmarked by Kuwait for humanitarian assistance was allocated to countries affected by natural disasters. Kuwait had hosted both the first and the second International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, which had raised US\$ 3.6 billion for the cause. Moreover, Kuwait had donated millions of dollars in the form of voluntary contributions to UNHCR and other international organizations working to improve the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Kuwait remained committed to supporting its international partners in dealing with humanitarian crises.

11. **Mr. Mero** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his country had honoured its obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol thereto and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa of 1969. The United Republic of Tanzania continued to welcome genuine asylum seekers and persons in need of protection and applied the principle of non-refoulement. The country currently hosted some 120,000 refugees and asylum seekers and had recently naturalized around 162,000 refugees from Burundi and 3,000 from Somalia. However, further financial assistance was required to facilitate the local integration of those refugees and thus put an end to one of the country's most protracted refugee situations. Over the previous few years, thousands of refugees living in the United Republic of Tanzania had been resettled in a third country, thereby lessening the burden on the country's infrastructure. The United Republic of Tanzania intended to launch a programme to resettle some 32,000 Congolese refugees in the United States in 2015. In addition, the United Republic of Tanzania was preparing to ratify the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. It was hoped that all refugees would be issued with identity documents in the near future.

12. **Mr. Condé** (Guinea) said that the Ebola virus epidemic had already claimed 630 lives in Guinea. In response to that crisis, the Government of Guinea had declared a state of emergency and introduced rapid response mechanisms to prevent the disease from spreading. Over the years, Guinea had provided refuge to nearly 1 million refugees fleeing armed conflicts in the region. Those refugees continued to enjoy the hospitality and protection provided by the Government of Guinea. Nearly 9,000 refugees still lived in Guinea, most having come from Côte d'Ivoire. Unfortunately, the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Côte d'Ivoire under the tripartite agreement signed by the Governments of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire and UNHCR had been suspended on account of the outbreak of the Ebola virus in the region.

13. That outbreak, and the economic downturn and restriction of movement that it entailed, could lead to a regional food crisis in the near future, placing refugees at great risk. The continued provision of food aid by the World Food Programme was therefore vitally important. While progress had been made in documenting the refugees who were to be integrated into local host communities, Guinea required additional financial resources from UNHCR to ensure the success of the integration process. He called upon the international community to continue supporting the Government of Guinea in its efforts to contain and eradicate the Ebola virus epidemic.

14. **Mr. Chilangwa** (Zambia) commended the efforts of UNHCR to assist the persons displaced by the conflicts in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Zambia had made considerable progress in integrating former Angolan refugees into local communities. The Government of Angola had begun to issue Angolan nationals living in Zambia with national identity documents, thereby enabling the Government of Zambia to issue residence permits to those former refugees. He thanked the Governments of Japan, Canada, the United States and the African Union for their financial contributions to that initiative.

15. Zambia welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to establish new partnerships and to strengthen its existing partnerships in order to respond to the current challenges in the areas of refugee protection and humanitarian assistance. The Programme's partnerships with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were particularly important in facilitating local integration in Zambia and in dealing with mixed migration flows in the Horn of Africa. UNHCR should also work more closely with regional bodies in order to find durable solutions to the refugee situation in the country.

16. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) commended Austria on the effectiveness of its asylum system and its resettlement programme for Syrian refugees, and welcomed its plan to withdraw some of its reservations to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Islamic Republic of Iran was to be commended on the measures it had taken to assist, integrate and repatriate the Afghan refugees living in the country. He called for stronger international commitment to the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries. He thanked France for the central role its armed forces had played in peacekeeping operations in Mali and in Central Africa. He agreed that UNHCR needed to identify and develop partnerships with donors in the private sector and other non-traditional donors. He commended Australia on the effectiveness of its resettlement programme. However, while action was needed to prevent people smuggling, asylum policies should not be so stringent as to deprive asylum seekers and other people in need of the protection they required. Ethiopia deserved praise for keeping its borders open to people in need, for its generosity in hosting large numbers of South Sudanese and Somali refugees and for the educational opportunities it afforded refugees. Turkey was also to be commended on its open border policy and on the effectiveness of the authority responsible for disaster and emergency management in assisting internally displaced persons in Iraq.

17. Kuwait had long been a generous provider of bilateral aid and was now playing an increasingly important role in the multilateral system. He would be visiting Sudan with Kuwaiti representatives in October 2014. The decision by the United Republic of Tanzania to naturalize 162,000 Burundians and Somali Bantus had come after lively public debate and was a courageous move. UNHCR was aware of the concerns expressed by the delegation from Guinea regarding local integration and food security and would work to resolve them. Zambia had successfully dealt with the repatriation of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its policy of integration of Angolans was proving equally positive.

18. **Mr. Chibingu** (Observer for Malawi) said that approximately 20,000 refugees and asylum seekers were present in his country. Arrivals from countries where camps were being closed were on the rise. The claims of some asylum seekers entering the country were dubious and the authorities were tightening screening procedures. As a result of assistance from UNHCR and the World Food Programme, people in the Dzaleka refugee camp and Karonga transit shelter had been receiving full rations since March 2014. The Government of Malawi favoured voluntary repatriation and encouraged Rwandans and Burundians to

return home. Almost 150 refugees had been resettled in third countries and the Government would welcome further resettlement in the spirit of burden-sharing.

19. **Mr. Quintana Aranguren** (Colombia) said that the National System for Comprehensive Victim Support and Reparation was made up of a network of institutions working at the national and local levels. Between 2012 and 2014, 263,000 victims of the armed conflict in Colombia had received compensation totalling US\$ 800 million. The Land Restitution Unit had received 55,000 applications to register expropriated land. US\$ 700 million in humanitarian aid for displaced persons had been disbursed since 2012. Specific projects had been launched to promote the return, resettlement and local integration of displaced persons. The Government was working with the authorities of Ecuador to ensure the safe return of Colombian refugees from that country. Colombia provided international protection to victims of generalized violence, foreign aggression and internal conflicts, as well as to persons who were at risk of being tortured. Of 551 requests for refugee status made since 2009 in Colombia, 318 had been filed in 2014. In that same year, the Government had ratified the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

20. **Mr. Boukili** (Morocco) said that the continued existence of refugee camps in Tindouf was due to the host country's ongoing military, political and financial opposition to the unity and territorial integrity of Morocco, and its refusal to engage in constructive dialogue to resolve the situation. The camps had been militarized and the host country had reneged on its responsibilities to their inhabitants. Invitations by the host country to UNHCR to carry out a census of the camp populations amounted to political opportunism. Such a census should occur only in the context of dialogue and respect for the territorial integrity of Morocco.

21. **Mr. Meriguet Martínez** (Ecuador) said that 90 per cent of the 60,000 refugees present in his country were Colombian nationals, and that most of them were integrated into local society. There were no refugee camps in Ecuador. The fact that nearly 1,000 Colombians still entered the country every month seeking refuge demonstrated that the conflict in Colombia had not ended. The Government of Ecuador had offered its good offices to help achieve peace in Colombia. While it favoured voluntary repatriation when conditions permitted, it also supported local integration, resettlement in third countries and other regional mechanisms allowing for permanent residence. Ecuador could not stand by in silence while the promoters of strife profited from conflicts that unleashed human suffering. His country was disconcerted by the fate of the peoples of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Libya, Iraq, Western Sahara, Pakistan and Africa. The Government of Ecuador called on all States that had not done so to ratify all the international instruments regarding statelessness, refugees and migrants.

22. **Mr. Lomónaco** (Mexico) said that his Government welcomed initiatives by UNHCR to work more closely with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Mexico had withdrawn its reservations to article 32 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and article 31 of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. It had strengthened its ties with Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon and contributed US\$ 3 million to UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for use in the Middle East. The declaration and action plan that would be announced on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration would further address the protection needs of refugees and stateless persons. Mexico provided tailored assistance to unaccompanied minors arriving in the country as refugees and was improving systems for identifying those in need of international protection. Cooperation between Mexico and UNHCR in that area was improving.

23. **Mr. Chirpanliev** (Bulgaria) said that the European Union (EU), the European Asylum Support Office, UNHCR, the Czech Republic, Holland and a host of organizations

had helped Bulgaria to deal with a significant increase in arrivals of asylum seekers over the previous year. Asylum capacity had risen from around 1,200 places to a maximum of 6,800. Funds had yet to be made available for the 2014–2020 strategy for integrating persons who had been granted international protection. More than 90 per cent of asylum seekers did not wish to remain in Bulgaria and less than 5 per cent wished to return to their home countries. Those who had received refugee status refused to leave transit centres, take language classes or accept work. Rather, they protested to the European Commission about restrictions on their right to freedom of movement and demanded the revision of the Dublin II Regulation. Under the circumstances, the Government of Bulgaria believed that the regulation should be eased. In recognition of the problems faced by his Government, Germany had decided not to repatriate some 4,000 Bulgarian asylum seekers, and had appealed to other European States to assist Bulgaria.

24. **Ms. Ellis** (New Zealand) stressed the importance of inter-agency coordination in the humanitarian field, in order to prevent duplication of efforts. UNHCR and OCHA should ensure that priority was given to implementing the Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations Coordination in Practice. The development of sustainable livelihoods among displaced people must be supported. Conflict prevention and resolution should continue to underpin international efforts to stop humanitarian crises before they occurred. Efforts by UNHCR to improve its administrative systems would strengthen efficiency and accountability. The Government of New Zealand was pleased to co-chair the Contact Group for resettlement of Colombian refugees.

25. **Monsignor Gyhra** (Holy See) said that the pressure on host States created by the growing numbers of displaced persons placed an obligation of solidarity on the international community. The focus of policy had to shift from assistance to prevention. The Holy See supported the development of an increased global partnership, based on human solidarity rather than selfish interests, to answer the plight of refugees and asylum seekers.

26. **Mr. Subari** (Observer for Georgia) said that around 10 per cent of the population of Georgia had been displaced as a result of war in the 1990s and 2008. Two thirds of internally displaced persons (IDPs) still needed permanent housing and 40,000 lived in dire conditions. As international donor funding decreased, the Government of Georgia was combining housing initiatives with attempts to match IDPs with available job opportunities, taking into account their education and skills. Such initiatives were harder to implement in the case of refugees who had to overcome language and cultural barriers. It should not be forgotten, however, that the thousands of Kurds and Syrians who had fled persecution in the nineteenth century today formed vibrant communities in Georgia.

27. **Mr. Bollavaram** (India), noting that UNHCR had responded to five system-wide Level 3 emergencies in the previous year, said that there was growing concern that emergency response was diverting UNHCR from its core mandate. The Agency should continue to focus on the plight of refugees. For its part, India was refining its administrative mechanisms in order to improve the lot of refugees while they remained in the country. The Government of India welcomed the work done by UNHCR with urban refugees from neighbouring countries and the bilateral consultations between the Agency and the Indian authorities had proven to be a useful platform for dialogue.

28. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) said that UNHCR would cooperate with the authorities in Malawi to ensure that people in need received protection. It was to be hoped that peace talks in Colombia would prove successful. Cooperation between Colombia and Ecuador regarding displaced persons was laudable. The mandate of UNHCR was strictly non-political and any census it might carry out in the Tindouf refugee camps would have no political implications. UNHCR greatly appreciated Mexico's contributions to its activities in the Middle East. Work with Bulgaria to build its asylum system would continue but it

should be underlined that all borders must remain open to refugees. New Zealand's role in the Colombia Contact Group was welcome, as was the unfailing advocacy by the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in favour of refugees, migrants and tolerance. That Georgia had not sought to gain political advantage from its IDP situation was worthy of praise. It was heartening to hear of refugees of the past being referred to as vibrant communities in the present. UNHCR would never neglect its core mandate.

29. **Mr. Nduwimana** (Observer for Burundi) said that the Government of Burundi was grateful to the United Republic of Tanzania for its decision to naturalize former Burundian refugees. As at August 2014, some 57,700 refugees had been present in Burundi. Food vouchers for refugees had been introduced in 2014 and the distribution of charcoal briquettes instead of firewood had begun in order to curb damage to the environment. The flow of asylum seekers and refugees from certain parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained a source of concern. After a long period of strife, Burundi was at peace and 600,000 refugees had returned home. The Government of Burundi called for the cessation of refugee status in all remaining countries that were hosting Burundian nationals.

30. **Ms. Tinoco Brenes** (Costa Rica) said that her country had taken a number of steps to comply with international protection standards for refugees and vulnerable groups, including the adoption of general migration and anti-trafficking legislation and the establishment of a refugee commission and fund. She expressed appreciation of UNHCR support for the Nansen Initiative and noted that Costa Rica would be hosting a regional workshop on temporary protection and humanitarian visas in 2015.

31. **Ms. Dlamini** (Swaziland) requested further UNHCR technical assistance to manage the large influx of refugees and asylum seekers into Swaziland. In accordance with UNHCR recommendations, the Swazi Government had recently introduced machine-readable travel documents.

32. **Mr. Sonko** (Gambia) said that the Gambian Government had taken steps to improve its national integration and livelihoods programmes in an effort to strengthen the protection and assistance provided to refugees. The Gambia had acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in July 2014 and all refugees were granted access to basic public services, such as health and education. Despite the favourable conditions and protection measures from which they benefited, a considerable number of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in the Gambia continued to press for resettlement, rather than local integration or voluntary repatriation. He therefore urged UNHCR to take the necessary steps to address their vulnerable situation, particularly given the cessation of UNHCR material assistance to their communities in 2003.

33. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) called for an integrated approach to the growing global refugee crisis. The international community had failed to find a durable solution to the Syrian conflict, and neighbouring countries would continue to face great difficulties in guaranteeing the basic needs and human rights of the Syrian refugee population, unless additional financial resources and humanitarian assistance were provided. Steps must also be taken, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III), to end the illegitimate suffering inhumanely imposed on Palestinian refugees by the Israeli occupation forces.

34. UNHCR support had been crucial to the success of the national Educate a Child Programme, led by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, which had enabled 10 million children worldwide to gain access to good quality education. Qatar continued to provide assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in a number of countries and had established strategic partnerships with several organizations in an attempt to develop innovative solutions to humanitarian and refugee issues.

35. **Ms. Ciobanu** (Romania) noted with great concern the worsening situation in Ukraine and commended UNHCR for its role in providing assistance and support to those persons who had been internally displaced. Her country supported the increased international focus on innovative approaches to the problems faced by refugees and internally displaced persons and recognized the need to improve the interaction between humanitarian and development work. Romania had renewed its own national resettlement programme for the period of 2014–2015; its national emergency transit centre had hosted more than 1,500 refugees since 2008. As a strong supporter of UNHCR, Romania would continue to contribute to the funding of the Agency, primarily through annual non-earmarked contributions.

36. **Mr. Bugelli** (Malta) said that Malta continued to receive a large number of irregular migrants fleeing conflicts in the African region. Providing the international protection they needed was made difficult by the country's small size and limited resources. The border surveillance of countries of origin should therefore be strengthened in order to prevent irregular migration and its attendant risks, including loss of life in the desert and at sea. Irregular migration could also be curbed by setting up programmes in specific regions of Africa to provide legal avenues of access to international protection. At the same time, efforts should be made to curb the activities of human trafficking networks, which exposed migrants to abuse, ill-treatment and potential loss of life.

37. **Ms. Menéndez Pérez** (Spain) said that political solutions to the five ongoing Level 3 emergencies must be found as a matter of urgency. As highlighted in the high-level segment on enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa, greater use should be made of available risk prevention instruments, such as early warning system indicators, and the structural causes and potential risk factors for conflict should be addressed. Her country welcomed the Inter-Agency Standing Committee transformative agenda and the new Refugee Coordination Model and urged UNHCR to strengthen its cooperation with other United Nations agencies.

38. Development actors should enhance their emergency response capacities, and innovative methods of assistance should be developed to promote refugees' self-sufficiency and facilitate their integration into host communities. Spain welcomed the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection at Sea and supported the new UNHCR strategy for the mobilization of private resources to address the Agency's funding gap.

39. **Mr. Jansons** (Latvia) commended UNHCR staff for their efforts to respond to the great number of humanitarian crises worldwide. Stressing the importance of providing special protection to women and children, he welcomed the UNHCR 2012–2016 Education Strategy and the international efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence. In response to the significant increase in the global number of refugees and internally displaced persons, the Latvian Government intended to provide further financial support to UNHCR in addition to its annual non-earmarked financial contributions.

40. **Mr. Kortu** (Sierra Leone) said that the Sierra Leonean Government had implemented an exemption from the cessation clause for 90 Liberian refugees and had granted residence permits to 935 well-integrated Liberian nationals. His country was committed to ensuring fair, efficient and transparent asylum systems through the amendment of its Refugee Protection Act and had established a task force to address the issue of statelessness. Accession to the two Conventions on statelessness remained a priority for Sierra Leone, which requested further UNHCR technical support for the implementation of international protection principles by the relevant Government institutions. However, many of the efforts undertaken in that direction had been hindered by the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus in the country.

41. **Ms. Cordeiro Dunlop** (Brazil) commended UNHCR efforts to assist and protect refugees and internally displaced persons, particularly those fleeing the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, and urged the international community to share the Syrian refugee burden with neighbouring host countries. Her country had recently contributed US\$ 1.2 million for UNHCR activities in that regard and US\$ 1 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund.

42. Despite having been faced with a significant increase in refugee applications in recent years, Brazil ensured that all refugees had access to public services, such as health care and education, on an equal footing with Brazilian nationals. Its national resettlement programme had already provided assistance to 620 refugees of various nationalities and a national humanitarian visa programme for persons affected by the Syrian conflict, applying the principles enshrined in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, had been launched in 2013. The Brazilian Government was playing an active role in efforts, under the Cartagena +30 process, to prepare a new action plan on refugees and stateless persons for the Latin American and Caribbean region, which would culminate in a ministerial conference in Brasilia in December 2014.

43. **Ms. Poalelungi** (Moldova) said that her country had recently signed an Association Agreement with the European Union which would serve to strengthen regional cooperation on refugee and asylum matters. The Moldovan Government had brought its national legislation fully into line with European and international asylum standards and guidelines. Moldova remained firmly committed to its obligations under the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and would continue to provide protection to thousands of persons displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.

44. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) said that the voluntary return programme for Burundi refugees had been a great success and congratulated the Burundian Government on its generosity towards Congolese refugees. He welcomed the development of national asylum, refugee and statelessness legislation in Costa Rica, and the introduction of machine-readable documents in Swaziland, as important steps in implementing international refugee protection principles. The Gambia was to be commended on its accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and its focus on local integration of refugees. He expressed support for the Qatari Educate a Child Programme and thanked the Qatari Government for its in-kind contributions of US\$ 30 million to assist Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Turkey. He commended the contribution of the Romanian Emergency Transit Centre to the UNHCR protection strategy. Recalling the remarkable rescues of migrants carried out by the Maltese armed forces at sea, and noting the Maltese Government's commitment to the improvement of detention and reception conditions, he stressed that the European Union must consider Malta as a special case owing to its location, size and capacity.

45. Endorsing the remarks made by the representative of Spain, he expressed appreciation of the Spanish Government's extraordinary generosity in funding UNHCR activities, particularly in the light of the global economic crisis. He expressed deep solidarity with the Government and people of Sierra Leone during the current Ebola outbreak and thanked the country for its continued cooperation with the Agency. He noted the success of the Brazilian Government's asylum initiatives, particularly the national humanitarian visa scheme for Syrian and Haitian refugees and looked forward to the ministerial conference in Brasilia in December 2014, which would mark the end of the Cartagena +30 process. Lastly, he welcomed the Moldovan Government's adoption of a comprehensive asylum system and legislation on statelessness.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.