



General Assembly

Distr.: General
30 December 2011

Original: English

Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Sixty-first session

Summary record of the 651st meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 4 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Knutsson.....(Sweden)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Executive Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

In the absence of Mr. Badr (Egypt), Mr. Knutsson (Sweden), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Seilenthal** (Estonia) said that, at 43.7 million, the number of the world's forcibly displaced was at a 15-year high. In 2011, already protracted situations had been further exacerbated by new and ever more complex conflicts and disasters and humanitarian needs had increased worldwide. Estonia, for its part, had continued its support for critical UNHCR activities in the Horn of Africa and South Sudan.

2. The agency should also work closely with Governments and civil society to identify long-term solutions to the less widely publicized problem of statelessness, which kept 12 million persons in legal limbo. Accurate data in that connection was vital, and the forthcoming commemorations might be used to raise awareness of UNHCR activities on statelessness. He welcomed the High Commissioner's efforts to broaden the donor base, including through innovative approaches such as "digital diplomacy", and the development of the online game *Against all odds* (<http://www.playagainstallodds.com>), which was useful for raising awareness of the plight of refugees. He said that, since 1991, Estonian citizenship had been granted to more than 150,000 stateless persons. People with "undetermined citizenship" in Estonia did, in fact, enjoy rights over and beyond those enshrined in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

3. With millions of refugees in the world increasingly falling prey to sexual and gender-based violence, the protection of women and children was now both a human rights and development cooperation priority for his Government. UNHCR should be commended for adopting a systematic approach to the issue in its field operations. In recognition, also, of the increased effectiveness and efficiency with which the agency now fulfilled its mandate, Estonia would be increasing its core contribution and continuing to respond to appeals for emergency funds.

4. **Mr. Adjoumani** (Côte d'Ivoire) paid tribute to UNHCR for 60 years' work on behalf of persons and expressed the hope that the forthcoming commemorations would be an opportunity for the agency both to highlight successes and to undertake some courageous stocktaking.

5. The post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire had left more than 3,000 dead, numerous disappeared, approximately 250,000 internally displaced and some 180,000 seeking asylum in the West African subregion, particularly Liberia. Moreover, several Ivorian villages and urban neighbourhoods had been totally or partially destroyed. Through the joint efforts of his own Government, UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the humanitarian situation had been improved significantly. However, thousands of internally displaced persons continued to live in camps, often in appalling conditions, and the humanitarian situation in the west of the country was particularly grave. President Alassane Ouattara would shortly visit that area to offer his support.

6. As for Ivorian refugees, tripartite agreements had been signed with Liberia and UNHCR, in order to facilitate voluntary returns, and similar agreements were envisaged with Ghana, Togo, Guinea, Mali and Benin. In that connection, his Government was profoundly grateful to the High Commissioner for his efforts to assess the needs of Ivorian refugees in Liberia and to provide appropriate solutions.

7. Despite having tragic events of its own with which to contend, Côte d'Ivoire hosted some 25,000 refugees and continued to promote their local reintegration or return. Côte

d'Ivoire, however, needed urgent material, technical and financial assistance to rebuild basic infrastructure and facilitate the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees, who had been rendered more vulnerable by the recent crisis in his country.

8. **Mr. Ignatovich** (Belarus), speaking as a new member, said that the High Commissioner's opening statement had been testimony to the expanding role of UNHCR in the humanitarian crises and conflicts that had emerged over the past year and to the self-sacrificing work of field staff. He agreed that long-term solutions depended above all, however, on political will over and beyond a humanitarian response.

9. Although Belarus hosted some refugees, it was predominantly a transit country for persons seeking asylum within the European Union. Since 1997, Belarus had received asylum or assistance requests from more than 3,600 persons from 57 countries. More than 800 foreigners had been granted refugee status, including 14 per cent of the 2011 applicants; and the absence of xenophobia and intolerance in Belarus favoured the naturalization process.

10. Commemorating its tenth year as a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Belarus took active steps to ensure that its new national asylum system complied with relevant international standards. Newly updated domestic legislation on refugees provided not only for asylum, but also for additional support for asylum-seekers. Infrastructure had been established to receive and house such persons; and a strategy to promote their integration was included in a five-year national population programme.

11. Cooperation at country level with UNHCR had thus far been constructive, but its potential had yet to be fully realized. Modalities for future cooperation had, however, been discussed during the High Commissioner's visit in 2010 and a country agreement was now in effect. Priority should be given to diversifying and broadening the agency's programme activities in Belarus with a view to strengthening asylum procedures and establishing a centralized processing system. UNHCR should also be more actively involved in international efforts to combat human trafficking and should cooperate with the recently established Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking in order to further identify strategies for refugee protection.

12. **Ms. Joiner** (African Union Commission) said that UNHCR could continue to rely on the support of the African Union Commission. UNHCR missions were much appreciated, particularly in the Horn of Africa, where there had been a dramatic increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons fleeing severe drought, famine and conflict. The displacement situation throughout the continent had indeed been exacerbated by insecurity, climate change and the global food crisis.

13. In August, in Addis Ababa, the Commission had convened a pledging conference for the Horn of Africa that had resulted in a renewed commitment on the part of African leaders and regional organizations to finding sustainable solutions to drought and famine, together with a pledge from the African Development Bank to focus on early recovery from the drought situation, as well as long-term mitigation.

14. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continued to help deliver humanitarian assistance to Mogadishu. However, as additional forces were required, she wished to reiterate the call to the United Nations to deploy and re-hat troops. All parties must do their bit to consolidate the peace process in Somalia and other countries of origin in order to favour the return of forcibly displaced persons and alleviate the burden on host countries. For root causes to be addressed and long-term resilience achieved, a holistic approach to sustainable development was required, with support from the international community over and beyond emergency needs.

15. The African Union Commission closely followed political developments on the continent and their impact on displacement. In North Africa, particularly Libya, the situation was still dire; in Côte d'Ivoire, the post-electoral violence had left several hundreds of Ivoirians displaced and many more living in alarming conditions; in South Sudan, the situation remained volatile, with tensions mounting in the border area of Abyei. In order to help the newly independent nation to stand on its own feet, the international community must honour its pledges.

16. She wished to call upon all present to take steps to achieve a tangible improvement in the lives of forcibly displaced people in Africa, especially in view of the urgency, magnitude and complexity of the problems in the continent. Lastly, she took note of ongoing UNHCR reform and welcomed the establishment of an independent audit and oversight committee which would provide additional checks and balances to strengthen performance.

17. **Mr. He Yafei** (China) said that displacement was becoming more complex throughout the world, with social instability, economic recession and poverty compounding traditional protection challenges. Some 70 per cent of refugees were unable to return home, while new humanitarian crises severely stretched the international emergency-response and protection system at a time when xenophobia in some countries was rife. The international community must renew its focus on refugee issues and devise additional measures to address root causes.

18. A genuine reduction in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons depended on international disputes being settled without recourse to military coercion. Developed nations should also provide comprehensive assistance to developing countries, particularly least developed countries to help them build their capacities and achieve the Millennium Development Goals; only then might the twenty-first century be one of equitable development in which respective advantages were shared.

19. Developed nations must help alleviate the burden borne by developing countries, which currently hosted 80 per cent of the world's refugees. There was a need, also, for strengthened cooperation to enhance international protection mechanisms, combat discrimination against refugees and improve their living conditions.

20. His Government wished to commend UNHCR on its refugee protection efforts and encourage it to proceed with its reforms. It supported strengthening of the emergency response system and of coordination with other humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian principles must remain paramount, and abuse of the international protection mechanism avoided. China would work with all concerned to help ensure the success of the ministerial-level commemorative meeting in December 2011.

21. **Mr. Bermúdez** (Observer for Honduras) said that more than 500,000 people in Central America had been displaced in the 1980s and that the support of UNHCR had proven essential in assisting those of them seeking refuge in his country. Similarly, in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, UNHCR had effectively coordinated the efforts of the humanitarian community to alleviate the crisis and had helped to accelerate the process of national reconstruction. The work carried out in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) during and following those emergencies was to be commended. Moreover, UNHCR and IOM had contributed to combating trafficking in persons and protecting unaccompanied minors in transit at the regional level.

22. Instability and violence continued to pose a challenge for the region. In Mexico and Central America, violence against persons in mixed migration movements was on the rise and had led to an increase in asylum applications from those attempting to escape gangs and organized crime rings. Dedicated regional and national instruments had improved the protection provided, particularly to those in mixed migration groups and in urban

settlements. Through the Plan for the Nation Strategy, his Government sought to offer incentives for Hondurans to stay in their country. Furthermore, the microcredit programme had played a key role in facilitating local integration of refugees and migrants.

23. **Mr. Kaiyamo** (Namibia) said that Namibia took its obligations towards refugees and asylum-seekers seriously and cooperated closely with UNHCR and other stakeholders such as the World Food Programme (WFP). It was encouraging the voluntary return of some 6,500 refugees whose status had been successfully verified under an important registration programme. In addition, a recent housing and population census would help provide accurate statistics for development initiatives and programmes benefiting both Namibians and refugees. However, additional financial and human resources were needed in order to repatriate refugees from remote areas hard of access and fund related legal processes, especially in view of the fact that cessation clauses for Angolan refugees became applicable at the end of the year.

24. His delegation supported the agency's plan to strengthen its emergency preparedness and play a more central role in the humanitarian response system. UNHCR should also redouble its efforts in refugee protection and assistance and look into the root causes of displacement in more depth.

25. **Mr. Park Sang-ki** (Republic of Korea) commended UNHCR on: its achievements in the complex situations in West Africa, Libya and the Horn of Africa; its ongoing management and structural reforms; and the steps it had taken to consolidate results-based management, oversight and accountability in the interests of increasing efficiency and doing justice to people of concern. The organization needed to broaden its donor base in order to afford adequate protection to people of concern. His Government would contribute to UNHCR efforts to garner additional support from traditional donors. The increasing interest and contributions from the private sector in the Republic of Korea constituted another positive development in that regard.

26. That refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea lived under constant threat of refoulement was a matter of particular concern. His Government urged States to uphold the principle of non-refoulement and commended the initiative that UNHCR had taken to address that issue.

27. The Government had improved the protection given to refugees by reducing the time taken by the refugee status determination process from one year to six months. Moreover, it had established a refugee support centre to assist applicants in meeting their daily needs and to facilitate their local integration. The upcoming ministerial conference in December 2011 to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees would provide an important opportunity to shape practical and durable solutions to current protection challenges.

28. **Mr. Oyarce** (Chile) said that UNHCR should enhance its response capacity and find durable solutions to the problem of growing refugee numbers, which was essentially a political issue. To that end, it should be provided with adequate support and assistance from multiple stakeholders.

29. With regard to inter-institutional partnerships, NGOs contributed more than operational input; they were strategic partners that helped to ensure the effectiveness and predictability of UNHCR operations. Account should be taken of regional factors when devising protection measures in implementation of the relevant international instruments on refugees. Local actors, NGOs and humanitarian organizations should furthermore be included in regional protection efforts. In that connection, the regional resettlement programme for Central America had generated new forms of cooperation in response to the problem of scant opportunities for voluntary repatriation.

30. Risk management, good governance and accountability were all essential factors in boosting the effectiveness and perception of UNHCR work in host communities. Furthermore, action was needed to prevent racism, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance from undermining efforts to build an inclusive society.

31. **Mr. Mihov** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Moldovan authorities were determined to pursue dialogue with UNHCR with a view to improving the legal guarantees and rights afforded to refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons in the national territory.

32. The authorities had duly updated relevant national legislation and established one of the most modern asylum systems in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Steps were being taken to solve problems relating to the printing of travel documents for refugees, to implement a regional protection programme and to carry out a local integration project for refugees. Two integration programmes had provided a partial solution to problems such as housing, health care and the completion of work on a centre for asylum-seekers, lone females and unaccompanied minors.

33. The plans for the creation of a European asylum system had prompted the Republic of Moldova to establish new objectives and priorities in connection with cross-border cooperation, increased border controls to prevent clandestine immigration, the establishment of a legal framework to regulate the social integration of refugees and the allocation of funding for implementation and for developing programmes to protect people of concern. The authorities were fully aware of the need to harmonize domestic legislation with international norms on statelessness and to create a status determination mechanism for asylum-seekers. The State planned to accede to the 1954 Convention and to the 1961 Convention on statelessness. The amended Act No. 200, concerning foreign nationals, was awaiting approval by the Government.

34. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), responding to the points raised, welcomed the comments by the representative of Estonia on statelessness and the need for an objective approach to progress in that area. The fact that the protection of women and children was at the centre of Estonian development cooperation policy mirrored some of the principal concerns of UNHCR.

35. UNHCR was fully committed to assisting the people and Government of Côte d'Ivoire and to offering cooperation in connection with voluntary repatriation and internally displaced persons. Côte d'Ivoire had shown generosity in welcoming Libyan refugees, and its local integration policy had yielded positive results.

36. That Belarus was a transit area for mixed migration flows only served to underscore the importance of securing an adequate protection space for refugees and asylum-seekers. Owing in large part to the generosity of Africa's peoples, the African Union furthermore represented a pillar of refugee protection, as evidenced by the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Effective international assistance was needed to boost the capacity of those African countries facing crises.

37. He welcomed the in-depth analysis by the representative of China of the causes of displacement and the need for improvement in the areas of economic development, cooperation and contingency planning. Noting the new protection challenges highlighted by the representative of Honduras, he affirmed that UNHCR was interested in pursuing dialogue on that issue. He commended the efforts of Namibia in the area of refugee registration and expressed his readiness to cooperate in establishing conditions for voluntary repatriation.

38. The participation of the Government of the Republic of Korea and the private sector in expanding the UNHCR donor base was a welcome development, as was the progress that had been achieved by the Republic of Korea in developing its asylum system. The situation of refugees from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was a cause for concern, and he urged States to uphold the principle of non-refoulement. He drew attention to the regional resettlement programme described by the representative of Chile and recalled the role that the country had played in resettling refugees from different countries.

39. He noted with satisfaction the ongoing efforts of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to enhance its asylum system, the progress it had achieved in boosting its capacity in that area and its planned accession to the conventions on statelessness.

40. **Mr. Santos Maraver** (Spain) said that the crisis in the Horn of Africa had not occurred overnight; the situation in Somalia had been the result of a series of factors, including the intensification of conflict, the effects of climate change and the economic crisis. International actors should take swift and concerted action in order to counteract the instability and alleviate the situation. The generosity of host countries and communities, many of them experiencing their own crises, had been vital in confronting the crisis.

41. The events of 2011 had underscored the need to respond generously when complex crises occurred and the importance of making prevention a priority. In that connection, Spain attached great importance to recognition of the interlinkages between humanitarian assistance and development support. The fight against racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination was vital to combating forced displacement and ensuring the effective integration of refugees and asylum-seekers.

42. Commending the High Commissioner for his work on budgetary reform and improving inter-agency coordination, he said that Spain and UNHCR had signed a framework agreement on strategic association for the period 2011–2012 aimed at clarifying priority areas for action and ensuring greater predictability in the State's contributions to UNHCR in exchange for greater accountability and progress with results-based management. Spain would continue to work with UNHCR in developing simple and effective evaluation and follow-up mechanisms.

43. **Mr. Guillermet-Fernández** (Costa Rica) said that his country had taken various steps to strengthen its system for the protection of migrants, including through the enactment of the Migration Act of 2010. It has established an administrative tribunal to deal with migration issues and appeals against administrative decisions on migration and refugee matters and reinstated the refugee unit of the Directorate-General for Migration in February 2010. In dealing with migration issues, Costa Rica took special care to protect children. It was making great efforts to meet its international obligations, but much remained to be done, especially to increase awareness of the issues and to enhance cooperation with civil society.

44. Turning to other issues, he stressed that the leadership role of UNHCR in coordinating refugee support was essential for improving the management of refugee flows. His Government was confident that the organization's internal reforms would result in a stronger institutional foundation for meeting future challenges. Costa Rica supported the "Cities of Solidarity" programme for the protection and local integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in Latin America and had provided assistance through microcredit schemes and access to work opportunities. Lastly, he called on the international community to tackle the increasingly complex issues of mixed migration and environmental refugees.

45. **Mr. Feyder** (Luxembourg) emphasized that it was essential for all Governments to fully support UNHCR and to provide the financing that the organization needed to respond quickly and adequately to crises. In that connection, Luxembourg had just signed a new multi-year framework agreement for 2012–2015 with UNHCR.

46. His Government was extremely concerned by the eruption of violence against civilians and humanitarian workers in certain countries, particularly Arab countries, in early 2011. For UNHCR to reach the greatest possible number of vulnerable individuals and fulfil its mission, it needed to be provided with the necessary enabling conditions. In particular, the safety of UNHCR personnel must be guaranteed and the neutrality, independence and impartiality of its actions fully respected.

47. Turning to the assistance provided by Luxembourg to UNHCR, he said that his Government supported the strengthening of the UNHCR presence in regions close to Somalia and had allocated €1,300,000 to the organization since the start of the crisis in the Horn of Africa. It was important to prepare for the long term, in particular for the return of displaced people to their countries of origin as soon as conditions allowed.

48. He drew attention to the new telecommunications support platform developed by Luxembourg in collaboration with the humanitarian community's Emergency Telecommunications Cluster. The "emergency.lu" platform would contribute to improved communication and coordination of relief efforts in emergencies and humanitarian catastrophes by giving humanitarian actors rapid access to voice and data communication facilities. Luxembourg had also provided financial support for a telecommunications project conducted jointly with UNHCR and a private firm to enable those in refugee camps to contact colleagues and family members.

49. **Mr. Nahodha** (United Republic of Tanzania), drawing attention to the challenges facing his country in its quest for durable solutions to protracted refugee situations, said that, despite the improvement in the conditions which had prompted refugees to flee their countries for the United Republic of Tanzania, the repatriation process in his country had stalled and the situation was causing conflict and frustration. Specifically, the 36,000 refugees in the Mtabila refugee camp had categorically refused to return to Burundi – an abuse of the institution of asylum that should not be allowed to continue. While the United Republic of Tanzania had a long history of offering asylum, it also had the right to safeguard the security of its people and to address the development issues facing them. His country would continue to honour its international obligations but the interests and security of its own people would remain its primary focus.

50. In 2010, his country had naturalized 162,000 former refugees from Burundi. The international donor community had pledged to support the integration programme for those individuals, but the funds had not materialized, a failing that was at variance with the spirit of international responsibility and burden sharing. He appealed to the international community and UNHCR to discourage abuses of the asylum system so as to restore host countries' confidence in it.

51. It was imperative that UNHCR should honestly assess its policies in order to tackle the underlying causes of shrinking asylum space. In particular, the issue of voluntary repatriation to areas considered safe needed to be examined. For example, two recent surveys had indicated that the security situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had improved considerably. He appealed to UNHCR to pursue promotional repatriation of Congolese refugees to areas considered safe.

52. **Mr. Garcia** (Philippines) said that his Government was grateful to UNHCR for its support in dealing with humanitarian protection challenges linked inter alia to conflict, climate change and natural disasters. The Philippines was currently being battered by typhoons and UNHCR was assisting his Government in addressing the needs of millions of Filipino disaster victims.

53. With the support of UNHCR, his Government was taking measures to respond to internal displacement caused by conflict. Legislation was being developed to enhance the protection of the rights of internally displaced persons, and the Philippine Armed Forces

had incorporated principles on protecting internally displaced persons into its peace and security plans. His Government had taken a range of measures to aid migrants and refugees, and its foreign policy continued to emphasize the advancement of the rights and welfare of the more than 10 million Filipinos living and working abroad.

54. Nearly a thousand Filipinos had benefited from evacuation assistance provided by UNHCR and IOM in the wake of recent crises in North Africa. The Philippines' Emergency Transit Mechanism continued to provide protection to refugees transiting through the Philippines to their countries of resettlement. The Philippine Government, together with UNHCR, had organized a workshop on regional cooperation on refugees and irregular movement in the framework of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

55. The Philippines had recently ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and was laying the groundwork for the establishment of policy and operational frameworks to deal with statelessness. The Government would work with UNHCR to identify and examine cases of statelessness in the country and among Filipinos overseas. In the meantime, it was important to further strengthen the international protection regime for migrants and refugees.

56. **Ms. Kangiwa** (Nigeria) paid tribute to the victims of the recent bombing at United Nations facilities in Abuja. Her Government was working with the United Nations Country Team to relocate the UNHCR office, and the National Commission for Refugees had offered office space and equipment to UNHCR on a temporary basis.

57. She welcomed the continued assistance provided by UNHCR to regional and subregional efforts to resolve refugee issues and to promote protection-sensitive assistance. Her Government was furthermore grateful to UNHCR and IOM for providing protection and evacuation assistance to hundreds of stranded Nigerian migrants in several North African countries. Lastly, in September 2011, Nigeria had acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

58. **Mr. Mwape** (Zambia) said that he wished to stress the need for States to remain committed to democratic values as a means of preventing conflict and displacement and sustaining peace and security. It was disheartening to contemplate the large number of refugee situations, both new and protracted, which placed a disproportionate burden on developing countries. He looked forward to the results of the study recently commissioned by UNHCR to quantify contributions by host States.

59. With regard to Angolan refugees in Zambia, his Government remained directly engaged with the Angolan Government to ensure that its nationals were not left in limbo after losing their refugee status at the end of 2011. Unfortunately the voluntary return process for 7,000 Angolan refugees had stalled, owing to insufficient funding. It was heartening to hear from representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that peace now prevailed in much of that country. While promoting the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees, Zambia had established exemption procedures in accordance with international refugee law to provide continuing protection to those needing it.

60. His country expected that increasing use would be made of immigration laws to resolve the situation of former refugees who opted to remain in asylum countries. Zambia would continue to look to resettlement countries to help resolve cases where crucial protection issues needed to be addressed.

61. **Mr. Roux** (Belgium) said that his country had recognized the ever-growing demands on UNHCR resources and had increased its contributions to UNHCR by

approximately 80 per cent in the past four years. Much of the funding had been earmarked for general uses so that the organization could respond more effectively to emergencies.

62. The Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium had visited the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya in September 2011 and witnessed the intensity and high quality of the work being done by UNHCR in collaboration with other organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). He had subsequently approved additional assistance for the camp population. His country attached great importance to protection of refugee women and children and to the prevention of gender-based violence. It strongly encouraged UNHCR to continue its efforts in those areas.

63. The organization's internal reform process seemed to be yielding results, as indicated in the evaluation by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, which would be published at year's end. The needs-based budget for 2012/13 highlighted the great disparity between required and available resources and the importance of well-defined priorities. He expressed the hope that recruitment for the new independent audit and oversight committee would be completed quickly so that the committee could begin its work. Synergies with other humanitarian actors needed to be strengthened, and he encouraged UNHCR to develop budgets and programmes based on a global-needs approach and in close coordination with those actors.

64. He called on all those present not to lose sight of the situation of some 1.7 million displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo whose security and living conditions were a cause for concern. Moreover, the situation in the Great Lakes region, which was confronted with the challenge of reintegrating and resettling long-term refugees, needed to be addressed through close regional cooperation, effective and lasting development strategies and greater synergy among all actors. Belgium was committed to working closely with the States in the region, UNHCR, the European Union and other stakeholders towards that end.

65. **Ms. Farani Azevêdo** (Brazil) said that, while humanitarian aid should be provided to displaced persons, there should be a greater focus on preventing displacement in the first place. Respect for human rights, poverty eradication, sustainable development, gender equality and democracy were all key elements in prevention efforts, and her country fully supported the work done by the United Nations Secretary-General to promote conflict prevention through diplomacy and development.

66. Brazil was committed to assisting refugees and had pledged to contribute US\$ 3.7 million to UNHCR in 2011. In addition to financial support, Brazil had been able to sustain a high eligibility rate for asylum claims and was continuing to resettle refugees under its resettlement programme. Indeed, 400 Haitian citizens had also been granted residence permits following the earthquake in Haiti in 2010.

67. She affirmed that negative attitudes to irregular migration had a significant effect on international protection and said that she shared the concerns expressed by the representative of the Holy See about the increasing cases of detention of asylum-seekers. Her country supported the efforts of UNHCR to increase the visibility of the issue of statelessness and was in the process of establishing a statelessness determination procedure.

68. **Mr. Gouandja** (Observer for the Central African Republic), expressing his appreciation for the efforts of the international community to find a peaceful solution to the political and military problems in his country, explained that the Central African Republic continued to host refugees from neighbouring countries. More than 15,000 refugees were currently housed in camps around the country and his Government had received welcome financial and operational support from the UNHCR office in Bangui. More than 50,000 Central African refugees were also being hosted by countries including Cameroon and

Chad, and he appealed to the international community for assistance in returning them to his country.

69. The Government of the Central African Republic had signed an agreement with military-political groups on the staggered return of internally displaced persons. A committee had been established to allow for the application of cessation clauses to urban refugees, and a process of local integration for long-term refugees had been set in motion. Naturalization requests from refugees that were ineligible for voluntary repatriation had been analysed and an approach developed for issuing biometric travel documents to refugees and providing cultivable land to refugees in camps. His Government looked to donors for support in those endeavours.

70. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), responding to the points raised, drew attention to the importance of the framework agreement and close cooperation between UNHCR and Spain, particularly with regard to the analysis of problems, development of solutions and harmonization of a common asylum policy among European countries. He said that he welcomed the development of a strong asylum policy in Costa Rica and its participation in the “Cities of Solidarity” project. He acknowledged the concerns expressed regarding the impact of climate change.

71. The framework agreement with Luxembourg, one of the biggest contributors to UNHCR, was also one of the longest running agreements. Luxembourg had been a pioneer in the telecommunications industry and, through both old and new agreements, UNHCR staff in the field made use of the technology that it provided.

72. With regard to the status of Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania and the invocation of cessation clauses, it had been agreed with the Government to apply the clause on an individual basis. He shared the concern expressed about the availability of funding for local integration and stressed that UNHCR was ready to provide financial assistance for the movement of refugees. The United Republic of Tanzania had been instrumental in assisting refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and he advocated a cautious approach to voluntary repatriation in that situation in view of the upcoming elections. A more accurate evaluation of the situation and possible next steps would be possible after the elections had taken place.

73. He highlighted the close collaboration between UNHCR and the Government of the Philippines in addressing natural disasters within the scope of the protection cluster and welcomed the State’s ratification of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and its adoption of new legislation on internally displaced persons.

74. Echoing the tribute paid by the representative of Nigeria to the victims of the bombing in Abuja, he welcomed the adoption by Nigeria of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

75. He said that Zambia had an outstanding asylum policy which took into account the different categories of refugees and allowed for different approaches to each category. In particular, the approach to cessation clauses was an example to all. UNHCR had acquired funding to assist with the repatriation of Angolan refugees currently in Zambia and IOM was still seeking funding for its part in the process.

76. He expressed appreciation for the increase in funding received from Belgium, in particular for the proportion of unearmarked funding, and expressed interest in hearing the results of the external evaluations, as they were useful in helping UNHCR to establish priorities, institute changes where necessary and develop new actions and operations.

77. He welcomed the progress made by Brazil on the issue of statelessness and expressed appreciation for that country’s emergence as a donor and for its successful asylum policy. He said that, although the situation of the Central African Republic was not

widely publicized, UNHCR was aware of the challenges faced by the country and would do its best to continue supporting both the repatriation of Central African refugees in other countries and assisting refugees from neighbouring countries in the Central African Republic.

78. **Mr. Al Musawi** (Observer for Iraq) said that his country was keen to resolve the plight of Iraqi refugees and to create an environment that would facilitate their return. The principal factors that had caused their displacement had been security issues, drought and unemployment. His Government was working to fight terrorism, improve security in the country and increase employment opportunities. An important next step would be to develop definitions of different categories of refugees. Steps to facilitate the return of refugees to Iraq included the opening of refugee liaison offices in neighbouring countries, the provision of transport for refugees wishing to return home, payment of grants of US\$ 300 for each family that returned, and assistance with documentation and enrolment of children in schools.

79. Iraq also played host to more than 40,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, and the Government was seeking lasting solutions to all forms of displacement of Iraqis by the end of 2011. Steps were being taken to protect vulnerable communities and improve conditions for refugees and the displaced in Iraq. He requested the assistance of UNHCR in ensuring a dignified process of return.

80. **Mr. Malloum** (Observer for Chad) said that his country was home to more than 300,000 refugees, a situation that had had a number of negative impacts. The limited availability of drinking water, for example, had created tensions between host and refugee communities and the Government had had to develop measures to introduce water-spreading weirs and sub-surface dams to address the situation. With additional funds from UNHCR, the measures had been implemented in one area of the country.

81. The Government had taken action to guarantee security in eastern and southern Chad and planned to allocate additional human and material resources to ensure the safety of the refugees in the affected regions until they returned to their own countries. Working in close collaboration with UNHCR and other humanitarian partners, Chad had established a refugee database and a system to facilitate the distribution of identity cards to refugees. He urged UNHCR to allocate increased funding to its office in Chad in order to enable it to address the many challenges that it faced. He expressed appreciation for the work of IOM and for the generosity of Tunisia and Egypt in assisting Chadian refugees fleeing the conflict in Libya.

82. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), responding to the points raised, said that UNHCR, in conjunction with the Government of Iraq, would continue its efforts to bring an end to the protracted refugee situation of Iraqi refugees in other countries. Cooperation between UNHCR and the Government of Iraq was improving, and he looked forward to continued collaboration in future. With regard to the statement by the representative of Chad, he stressed that UNHCR would continue to provide support at the national and local levels to reduce the negative impact that the presence of refugee populations had on host regions.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.