

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

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Standing Committee

**Ninety-second meeting
11-13 March 2025**

Held at the International Conference Center Geneva (CICG) ▪ rooms A-B-C

Summary record*, Tuesday, 11 March 2025, at 10.00 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Marcelo Vázquez Bermúdez.....(Ecuador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.06 a.m.

Opening of the meeting

The **Chairperson** declared open the ninety-second meeting of the Standing Committee and said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the requests of Indonesia, Malaysia, Panama and South Sudan to participate as observers.

1. *It was so agreed.*

1. Adoption of the agenda (EC/76/SC/CRP.1)

2. *The agenda was adopted.*

2. Adoption of the Standing Committee work programme for 2025 (EC/76/SC/CRP.2)

4. *The Standing Committee work programme (EC/76/SC/CRP.2) was adopted.*

Opening remarks by the Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)

5. The **Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)**, noting that over 123 million people worldwide had been forced to flee, called on Member States to remain united in their collective commitment to protect refugees and forcibly displaced persons. She emphasized the urgent need to find lasting solutions for them, despite the changes that had occurred since the Executive Committee meeting of October 2024, including growing uncertainties and the pressure to focus on many other competing priorities.

6. She thanked donors and Member States that had accelerated their contributions to UNHCR to help address its cash flow concerns and thanked host countries, which had shouldered more responsibilities, despite scarce resources. She announced that UNHCR had concluded 2024 with a strong level of funding with close to \$4.9 billion in contributions, which allowed provision of protection and assistance to about 120 million people around the world, including delivering life-saving support in Myanmar, the Sudan and Ukraine, as well as responding to 43 emergencies across 25 countries. For 2025, the budget stood at \$10.6 billion, including the \$10.2 billion which had been approved by the Executive Committee in October 2024 and the supplementary budget issued since to respond to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the surrounding countries.

7. She highlighted the uncertainty over funding, which was partly due to the pause in foreign assistance announced in January 2025 by the United States of America, pending a 90-day review of its foreign assistance programmes. She acknowledged and thanked the United States of America for being the largest donor and for their steadfast support of UNHCR over several decades. While underlining that the impact of the freeze had been immediate and severe, she said the organization remained confident that it would continue earning the trust of the Government of the United States of America and the American people.

8. She noted that more than a quarter of the top donors of the humanitarian and development system had announced reductions in their official development assistance. She stressed that the reduced funding would affect at least half a million people, who would no longer have access to water, sanitation services or medical help. The withdrawal of support risked destabilizing entire regions by severely impacting the ability of the humanitarian system to respond quickly and appropriately to the growing human consequences of war, conflict and persecution. For instance, in Bangladesh, in the camps in Cox's Bazar, where one million refugees lived, food rations were being cut, which would lead to malnutrition, with children and vulnerable people dying of hunger. In Kenya, there had been security incidents in the Kakuma refugee camp, where thousands of refugees clashed with police after receiving news of cuts in their food allocations. In the Sudan, some nine million people had been displaced by brutal conflict and urgently needed shelter, mental health and psychosocial support. In addition, some host countries were seeing reductions in bilateral aid, thereby weakening their ability to support refugees and to include them in their national services.

9. To mitigate the impact of the uncertainty on refugees and UNHCR operations, the organization announced a set of cost-cutting measures, which were initially focused on the administration and management of UNHCR. The organization placed restrictions on recruitment, with over 400 colleagues directly impacted to date. Over \$300 million in activities were frozen, with more under consideration, including in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Uganda, where UNHCR and partners had been forced to stop services for close to 180,000 refugee women and girls at risk of violence. Similarly, in Ethiopia, a total of 200,000 refugee women and girls had been directly impacted, and the closure of a safe house had left survivors at immediate risk of being killed. As part of potential additional measures, the organization was finalizing a comprehensive review of its offices to take advantage of more efficient ways to deliver.

10. UNHCR was also actively reaching out to existing and new donors for more flexible funding. It launched a new revolving fund of \$300 million to help boost the budget for critical emergency response and requested donors to focus on critically under-resourced programmes. The organization was continuing to expand and diversify its partnerships with the private sector beyond financial support and, since the end of January 2025, had seen an increase in contributions from individuals wanting to help people forced to flee. The organization aimed to raise \$700 million from the private sector, with close to \$300 million in unearmarked funds and the goal of reaching 3.2 million individual donors.

11. With reference to transformation and change, UNHCR was redoubling its efficiency efforts and innovative work both within the organization and across the United Nations system, supporting the ambitious inter-agency efficiency plans and system reforms. The organization systematically applied an efficiency lens to its delivery and generated savings of some \$59 million in 2024. Having launched its Business Transformation Programme several years ago, UNHCR had generated efficiency gains of some \$3.4 million in one year alone and was confident that it could achieve more with the 'best in class' technology to support the organization's enabling functions. The Deliver Better Roadmap, UNHCR's value for money framework, would be presented at the Standing Committee meeting in June 2025. She further informed that UNHCR was stepping up efforts to use artificial intelligence and emerging technologies to transform humanitarian responses, empower displaced communities, and drive innovation to deliver life-saving aid faster and more effectively. A flagship example, the Digital Gateway, was a platform that placed refugees in control of their own data, allowing displaced individuals to enter and update their information securely and to interact with UNHCR using new technology.

12. Underscoring the organization's dedication to transparency and accountability to address and prevent misconduct within the organization and beyond, she assured that zero tolerance for misconduct was even more important when the system was under stress. She informed that the organization had increased training and outreach to colleagues to proactively combat and mitigate fraud, as referenced in the annual report on the practice of the High Commissioner in disciplinary matters and cases of criminal behaviour. She announced that the organization had adopted an accountability framework that clarified the accountability objectives of UNHCR to deliver its mandate efficiently and effectively and provided an overview of the policies and processes it used, including its integrity systems.

13. With respect to the vision of the Global Compact on Refugees, she stated that UNHCR was continuing to adjust its planning to ensure a strategic shift to sustainable responses to ensure that humanitarian aid was dedicated to the most vulnerable, with longer-term responses rightly assumed by others. She elaborated that sustainable responses were about host countries supporting access of refugees to jobs and land and allowing them to start businesses and contributing to local economies, enabling refugees to help themselves and for host communities to benefit from the economic spark that these approaches entail. She said that the organization was continuing to appeal to donors, development actors and the private sector for the required resources.

14. Commending the UNHCR workforce for their commitment to work even harder to support people who rely on the organization under impossible conditions, she reassured that the organization was working closely with other equally impacted organizations across the system to ensure utmost support to all colleagues, no matter where they worked in the world.

3. Regional activities and global programmes

(a) Regional updates

15. The **Assistant High Commissioner for Operations (UNHCR)** noted that in 2024, UNHCR had responded to 43 emergencies across 25 countries, including in Burundi, where approximately 65,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo had arrived. In the Sudan, the conflict had driven 3.7 million individuals into exile, while over 8.8 million remained internally displaced, making it the largest internal displacement crisis globally. He recalled that preserving robust emergency response preparedness and response capacities to swiftly and effectively support governments and host communities in their endeavours to protect and assist refugees and internally displaced persons was central to the organization's mandate, which was often undertaken at great personal risk to UNHCR colleagues. He informed that 2024 had been the deadliest year for humanitarian workers, with 378 tragically losing their lives.

16. He pointed out that nine countries across the globe were each hosting more than one million refugees, fifteen countries had more than one million of their citizens internally displaced and the average duration of displacement had increased. He said that a response that was solely short-term and predominantly humanitarian fostered dependency among refugees and created tensions with host communities, adversely impacting the potential for durable solutions. It was against that backdrop, and in alignment with the four objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, that the High Commissioner had spoken about the importance of 'sustainable programming,' now referred to as 'sustainable responses,' at the recent Executive Committee meeting. Sustainable responses aimed to support governments and host communities in providing protection and assistance to refugees in a manner that fostered solutions as early as possible, including voluntary return, while promoting self-reliance for the benefit of both refugees and hosts, avoiding unnecessary dependency on humanitarian aid. He noted that sustainable responses significantly complemented the 'solutions' objective of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, in which UNHCR had been actively involved as one of the three champion agencies since the conclusion of the mandate of the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on internally displaced persons. He reaffirmed the commitment of UNHCR to engage Member States on the implementation of the approach, drew attention to the informal briefing on the topic held on 20 February 2025 and advised of plans to convene a second informal briefing before the June 2025 Standing Committee meeting. He noted that several countries had made considerable progress in pursuing sustainable responses by incorporating the approaches into their legislation, policies, and practices.

17. He emphasized that the two Global Refugee Forums, held in December 2019 and December 2023, during which numerous pledges supporting more sustainable responses were made, demonstrated the multitude of partners willing to come together in search of solutions to forced displacement. He said that the organization's partnerships with United Nations sister agencies, particularly the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were being strengthened to foster greater collaboration in implementing sustainable responses. In several countries, Resident Coordinators were actively contributing to that effort, including by leading the implementation of the United Nations Common Pledge 2.0 made at the Global Refugee Forum. He stressed that the national and international non-governmental organization partners remained the backbone of refugee response efforts, not only in emergency situations but also in supporting the inclusion of refugees into national social services. As had been reported in previous years, development actors, including international financial institutions, both global and regional, such as the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank, had incorporated the challenges of forced displacement into their strategies. Besides providing additional resources, they offered expertise to better measure and manage the impact of refugee presence. In 2025, UNHCR

established a new team with the World Bank to focus on the critical programmatic connection between humanitarian and development action to help achieve sustainable responses.

18. He pointed out that resources to respond to the ever-increasing number of forcibly displaced persons were stretched. In 2024, appeals launched for refugee responses were typically funded at 35 per cent, with the appeal for the Sudan situation, for instance, funded at 31 per cent. Noting the impending reductions in the official development assistance, he welcomed the increasing amount of development resources made available to refugee-hosting countries. Since 2017, the World Bank Window for Host Communities and Refugees had generated \$4.9 billion in investments across 92 projects in 20 low-income host countries. Additionally, under the Global Concessional Financing Facility, \$966 million in grants had facilitated \$7.7 billion in concessional loans to seven middle-income countries since 2016. Bilateral development actors were also bridging humanitarian and development efforts while reinforcing protection priorities.

19. Regarding regional solutions strategies, he stated that the solutions platforms launched at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, namely the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) in Central America and Mexico, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Support Platform, as well as the Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform (CAR-SSP), launched in 2023, continued to play a key role. Those forums allowed countries of origin and asylum to meet and agree on ways to better protect and assist refugees while seeking durable solutions. He highlighted the important role of the SSAR support platform at a time when forced returns of Afghans were taking place.

20. Relative to returns, he announced the return of Burundian refugees from the United Republic of Tanzania, which required increased attention and financing to ensure that returnees could rebuild their lives. In addition, while the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic remained fragile, some 300,000 refugees had also returned over the past months, with plans to repatriate up to 1.2 million Syrians in 2025, an operation requiring massive financial support for success.

(i) **East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes**

21. **The Director of the Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (UNHCR)** announced that there were 5.6 million refugees, 21.7 million internally displaced persons and 98,000 stateless persons in the region, an increase of nearly 9 per cent since the Standing Committee meeting of March 2024. He noted that one in every 16 persons living in the region had been forcibly displaced, and 25 per cent of all refugees in the region were born in exile. He explained that the biggest driver of displacement in the region remained the conflict in the Sudan, where over 8.8 million people had been forced to leave their homes, and over 3.7 million had crossed into mostly neighbouring countries since the beginning of the conflict.

22. He pointed out that although the urgency to meet the needs of the over 12 million forcibly displaced Sudanese and support lasting peace remained as relevant as it did in the previous two years, the Sudan was no longer the only major emergency impacting the region. Thousands of Congolese were undertaking treacherous journeys in search of safety in neighbouring countries. Burundi, one of the most densely populated countries on the continent, had generously received over 65,000 new arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the past four weeks alone. Uganda, which was already hosting 1.8 million refugees, was continuing to receive refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with over 18,000 arriving only in the previous month. Climate shocks and extreme weather events continued to add to the regional instability in 2024 with unprecedented floods ravaging the region, including in Burundi, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

23. He reaffirmed the commitment of UNHCR to transformative partnerships, exemplified through the work with host governments, development actors, and private sector partners. Moreover, UNHCR was leveraging pledges made at the two Global Refugee Forums to mobilize additional support for refugees and host communities. UNHCR was also supporting governments that were transforming protracted refugee camps into settlements,

noting the plans of the Governments of Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda in this regard. He said that UNHCR was additionally working with authorities to pursue sustainable solutions from the beginning of an emergency, taking a “solutions from the start” approach while continuing to respond to urgent humanitarian needs, and cited Ethiopia as an example. He said that the transformative partnerships of UNHCR similarly extended to regional economic communities, where 84 per cent of refugees were citizens of member States of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, and 78 per cent were citizens of member States of the East African Community.

24. He underlined that continued funding cuts for UNHCR, United Nations sister agencies and non-governmental organization partners, would mean that as many as 258,000 people would not receive the vital support UNHCR and partners provide them, and as many as 709,000 children would not access education, leading to increased organized crime, including human trafficking and terrorism, as well as desperate journeys towards Europe, the Gulf countries and southern Africa.

25. Relative to enhancing efficiency in the delivery of the organization’s services, he informed that UNHCR was increasing the use of cash, reviewing its procurement processes, and making savings in the way it managed its fuel and vehicle fleet. The organization was also reviewing how it worked with partners to enhance complementarity, avoid duplication and maximize impact. He noted that in Uganda, for example, UNHCR had saved \$10 million in the two previous years by streamlining registration, integrated protection services, and community-led desks.

26. The representative of **the Sudan, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group** and addressing UNHCR’s operations in the three sub-regions of Africa, said that African countries were sparing no effort to enhance refugee inclusion and promote sustainable solutions through national policies and regional cooperation. She noted that the three sub-regions were host to over 50.9 million forcibly displaced persons of concern to UNHCR, of which 26.3 million people were located in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, 9.7 million in the southern Africa region, and 14.9 million in the West and Central Africa region.

27. Africa faced a deepening displacement crisis driven by conflict, insecurity, and climate change. The war in the Sudan had triggered the world’s largest internal displacement, while instability in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to force millions from their homes. The Sahel remained a hotspot of violence, with Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Niger witnessing surging displacement and humanitarian needs. The Central African Republic and Chad were struggling with their internal challenges compounded by the spillover effects from the Sudan crisis, while over 14,000 school closures across West and Central Africa had left millions of children without education. In southern Africa, extreme weather, conflict, and health emergencies compounded vulnerabilities, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone hosting over 7 million displaced persons. Meanwhile, forced displacement and rising fatalities along dangerous routes highlighted an urgent need for coordinated action.

28. She explained that the Africa Group remained deeply concerned about the increasing impact of climate change on forced displacement. The devastating effects of extreme weather events such as Tropical Cyclone Chido in southern Africa, severe flooding in the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, as well as in West and Central Africa, underscored the need for enhanced preparedness and response mechanisms from UNHCR. In the Sudan, for instance, people who had already been displaced by conflict were being displaced again due to climate-induced disasters.

29. Recalling that the continent was host to over 35 million internally displaced persons, she stressed the need to sustain momentum and establish effective follow-up mechanisms for implementing the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Solutions to Internal Displacement following the conclusion of the Special Adviser’s mandate. She said this required fostering partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, including development and financial institutions, peace initiatives and climate action agencies, to effectively operationalize the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

30. In preparing for the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM) in December 2025, she reiterated the commitment of the Africa Group to assess progress towards more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing, as well as the implementation of pledges and commitments made during the second Global Refugee Forum. The Group stressed the importance of translating those commitments into tangible action and urged all members and partners to step up their efforts. Ahead of the third Global Refugee Forum in 2027, the Africa Group called for increased support and more concrete pledges that would contribute to the four objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, easing the pressure on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

31. She stated that the Africa Group remained deeply concerned about the severe funding shortfalls affecting refugee operations across the continent. Underfunding had led to drastic reductions in food assistance, healthcare, education, and protection services, severely impacting the well-being of displaced populations. In some areas, food ration cuts had led to malnutrition and increased protection risks, particularly for women and children. As of 31 January 2025, only 9 to 10 per cent of the operational needs for the regions in Africa had been funded, an alarming indicator of the disproportionate impact of funding shortfalls on the continent. The Africa Group urged donors to increase their contributions, particularly through unearmarked funding, to ensure that the most underfunded operations received the necessary support. The Africa Group equally urged UNHCR to prioritize the most underfunded operations to correct imbalances.

32. The representative of the **European Union, speaking on behalf of its member States**, said that its 25-year partnership with Africa remained a priority for all its member States, as was evidenced in the European Union's common vision for 2030. He welcomed the work of the African Union and the involvement of UNHCR and asserted that a gender-sensitive approach had to be central to the activities and budget priorities of the organization. The role of UNHCR in coordinating an integrated and human-centric approach through its regional offices was essential despite current financial challenges. It was important for UNHCR to continue prioritizing its efforts for durable solutions, facilitating inclusion autonomy and active involvement from development actors to focus on pathways to social and economic inclusion and self-reliance.

33. Regarding the deteriorated humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he deplored the use of firearms and heavy artillery in camps for displaced persons and the recruitment of children into armed groups, and encouraged UNHCR to continue its advocacy on gender-based violence and sexual violence. He reiterated the call for respect for international humanitarian law and for an immediate end to hostilities. Concerning the Great Lakes region, he said that the European Union was supporting regional efforts to offer sustainable solutions to refugees from Burundi and the Congo, particularly through voluntary repatriation and local reintegration. He recalled that although the European Union had raised grave concerns about the Sudan, the situation had deteriorated and led to immense human suffering. He stressed the importance of the organization's sustained and effective field presence in the most remote areas to effectively protect persons of concern because UNHCR and partners operated in an extremely volatile environment and faced deliberate obstruction of access.

34. He reaffirmed the European Union's support for UNHCR's operations in eastern Chad and the inclusion of refugees into host communities and urged the organization to prioritize gender-responsive protection interventions. He informed that the Office's role in protection, coordination and rapid displacement response was essential in South Sudan. He stressed that the organization's reinforced monitoring system, biometric registration and data interoperability efforts should enhance efficiency, and commended UNHCR and IOM for their robust coordination in efficient refugee transport, preventing border congestion. He pointed out that enhanced coordination may be needed as challenges increase, especially in the Upper Nile State, noting that protection risks remained particularly high for women, girls, children, persons with disabilities and persons in marginalized or vulnerable situations.

35. He highlighted the Ethiopian Government's progressive policy for refugee rights, the Government of Uganda for its generous policy towards refugees, and the Kenyan Government's commitment to the camp-to-settlement approaches and requested for UNHCR

to contribute to the full implementation of legislative advancements. He noted that the European Union would count on the role of UNHCR to continue assisting Nigeria in mitigating the impact of its camp closure policy, asserting that a systematic response was imperative to meet the needs of internally displaced persons affected by attacks motivated, inter alia, by religious extremism. He said that additional support was needed to address the crises in northwest and southwest Cameroon and the Central African Republic. With respect to West and Central Africa, the European Union called on UNHCR to maintain its protection focus, affirming that the deteriorating situation in the central Sahel and its impact on humanitarian access required action. He announced that the European Union was providing support to refugee registration in Mauritania as well as emergency assistance and longer-term support to both Malian refugees and host communities and was closely monitoring the situation of coastal countries. The European Union expressed concern about the situation in Mozambique, as it faced violence from armed groups in Cabo Delgado and the impact of Cyclones Chido and Dikeledi, and called on UNHCR to advocate for safe, voluntary and dignified return and relocation of internally displaced persons. He called on UNHCR to promote human rights while preventing the risk of expulsion and strengthening assistance to out-of-camp refugees.

36. The representative of **Ethiopia** aligned with the statement delivered by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group. He said that Ethiopia was currently hosting more than one million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, even though the country's commitment had been increasingly tested by environmental disasters such as the El Niño-induced heavy rains in 2024, which significantly impacted refugee populations, particularly in the Somali and Gambella regions and strained already limited resources. He stressed that while Ethiopia expressed appreciation for the support extended by UNHCR and partners, additional support was nonetheless required.

37. He stated that despite the challenges, Ethiopia had made significant progress in implementing the pledges made during the 2019 and 2023 Global Refugee Forums. For instance, the Ethiopian electrification strategy for refugees and host communities 2024-2030 was being implemented, as were solar mini-grid electrification projects in Sheder, Melkadida, and Kobe refugee camps. In line with its pledge to include refugees in national systems, Ethiopia had signed a memorandum of understanding and data sharing protocol among twelve key government actors integrating migration data into the national central statistics service. Similarly, progress had been made on refugee education inclusion, with eight secondary schools integrated into the national education system and refugee data incorporated into the education management information systems. In addition, over 70,000 refugees benefitted from the national identification programme through the Fayda identification number. To move away from a camp-based assistance model, the Government was transitioning to a settlement approach, integrating services in refugee-hosting areas. Furthermore, with support from the German International Cooperation Society (GIZ), IGAD and UNHCR, Ethiopia was developing the Makatet Roadmap, incorporating a whole-of-society and a whole-of-government approach through stakeholder consultations. Ethiopia had also prepared a draft proclamation to prevent internal displacements and provide protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and its 2024 National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management included provisions for protecting and assisting internally displaced persons during disasters and conflicts.

38. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said that the Government had doubled its funding to \$112 million in 2024 to act on its commitment to working with UNHCR to respond to crises. Acknowledging the need to focus on disrupting criminality, deterring irregular movements and enabling safe and dignified return where appropriate, she emphasized that the United Kingdom agreed with the need for an integrated route-based approach and would continue to partner across countries and organizations to support the UNHCR app. The representative of **Australia** commended the generosity of countries and communities hosting refugees and displaced populations and expressed concern about the intersecting humanitarian crises in the region. She noted that since the outbreak of the conflict in the Sudan, Australia had committed AUD50 million in humanitarian assistance, including AUD15 million to UNHCR for the Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan. She underscored Australia's deep concern over the continued destruction and loss of life taking place in the Sudan, including the deteriorating humanitarian

situation and widespread use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war, and called on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law.

41. She acknowledged the considerable insecurity and accessibility challenges and welcomed further details from UNHCR regarding the impact on its operations and how Member States could assist through humanitarian diplomacy. She asserted that humanitarian agencies had to be given safe and unimpeded access to deliver life-saving assistance to those impacted by the conflict in the Sudan and, while commending the efforts of UNHCR to find durable solutions for refugees, including its resettlement of 29,336 refugees in 2024. She called on the international community to continue to work together, including to provide resettlement and complementary pathways.

42. The representative of **Kenya** said her country aligned itself with the statement by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group. She said Kenya remained deeply concerned over the high numbers of people displaced within the region and requested additional disaggregated and granular data to ensure targeted engagement. She welcomed the assurance that UNHCR would continue to advocate for increased development and climate financing and asked for regular updates on progress made towards securing climate financing, including for major host countries. She took note that UNHCR would address the underlying drivers of onward movements and enquired about additional information on the relevant measures the organization planned to take.

43. Further, she took note of the 2024 UNHCR Child Protection Policy, commended the intent of the organization to prioritize its implementation and requested a briefing from UNHCR on the policy.

44. Highlighting the challenges of differentiated assistance and the reduction of food rations by WFP, she underscored that the reductions would negatively impact the most vulnerable. She cited the food protests in Kakuma on 28 February 2025 and urged UNHCR to engage with WFP and other relevant stakeholders to address the concern, including its social impact.

45. She said it was crucial to ensure that the sustainable responses model equitably contributed to the realization of all four objectives of the GCR and that it was essential to ensure a clear understanding of what sustainability entailed for refugees, countries of origin, host countries, and donors. In positioning hosting areas as frontier markets for investment, she urged for a focus on manufacturing to contribute to job creation for refugees and host communities. On education, she noted that only 39 per cent of refugee children of school-going age had been enrolled in school in 2024, representing a 10 per cent decrease from 2023. She requested details on the trends and measures that could be undertaken to address the situation. On resettlement, she called for global solidarity in responsibility-sharing and urged UNHCR to engage traditional resettlement countries to increase their quotas and non-traditional resettlement countries to open possible resettlement opportunities.

46. With respect to funding, she noted with regret that despite Kenya's emphatic calls for resourcing solutions, impact area 4 on solutions remained the least funded in the region. She underlined that with only 9 per cent of funding for the region amid new conflicts, massive displacement, and global fiscal realignments, a crisis was imminent. She requested details on efforts being undertaken to address the situation and to convene a session involving relevant actors to discuss the trends.

47. The representative of **Denmark** said her country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. She noted that although continued support from UNHCR and the international community to the forcibly displaced in Africa and to host communities was crucial, the complex nature of the crises demonstrated the need to address root causes comprehensively. In light of the funding challenges, prioritization of long-term development had become even more crucial, and encouraged all new and existing donors to join Denmark and other countries to provide flexible and unearmarked funding.

48. She pointed out that the policy pledges from a number of African countries made at the Global Refugee Forum were a clear testimony to the will and ability of those countries to protect and foster the potential of refugees while awaiting durable solutions. She recalled that

at the Global Refugee Forum, Denmark made a number of commitments in support of several host country pledges related to socio-economic inclusion, refugee self-reliance, climate resilience and better data and protection, and informed that Denmark was implementing those pledges in close cooperation with its partners, including in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

49. She called on UNHCR to enhance its focus on sustainable responses to play a catalytic role in mobilizing and facilitating the engagement of development actors and the private sector in support of host countries and said that Denmark was actively supporting that objective by investing in initiatives such as the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement based in Copenhagen and the International Finance Corporation-UNHCR joint initiative. She also welcomed the establishment of the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Team on Sustainable Responses.

50. She stressed that climate action and climate resilience were top priorities for Denmark and urged for displaced populations to be accounted for in national climate plans to ensure that climate action worked for those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. As co-lead of the Global Refugee Forum Climate Action Pledge, she announced that Denmark was committed to supporting the mobilization of the necessary support.

51. The representative of **Switzerland** pointed out the many challenges and protracted crises faced by UNHCR in the region and called for close coordination with other United Nations organizations. He enquired about how UNHCR would involve other actors in the peaceful resolution of crises taking into consideration the limited resources available to host communities. He proposed a review of those fragile contexts, including the widespread nature of gender-based violence in the region, and stressed the need for a favourable environment for protection and the importance of collaborating with national and international actors. In view of the very modest resources of UNHCR, he queried how the organization envisioned mobilizing more development funds in the present context and what would be the impact of the dependence on humanitarian aid should the efforts fail.

52. The representative of **Uganda** said her country aligned itself with the statement by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group. She underlined the importance of collective international responsibility and the need for increased support for UNHCR. She stated that investing in humanitarian causes was important to ensure stability in the world, providing hope to the youth who could otherwise be misled. She highlighted that the largest hosting countries were low and middle income countries which continued to prioritize humanity amidst competing priorities and called for donor countries to do better. The potential loss of all investments and support provided to date would represent a significant misallocation of taxpayers' funds and discontinuing efforts at this juncture would negate the investments made thus far.

53. She recalled that Uganda was host to over 1.8 million refugees and remained the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. In the previous three months alone, the country had received over 30,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other neighbouring countries and continued to keep its borders open despite competing pressures. She stated that Uganda had generous policies for integrated services for refugees geared towards sustainable responses. She highlighted that the UNHCR operation in Uganda had saved \$10 million through re-prioritizing operations, including in procurement processes. Reaffirming Uganda's commitment to working with UNHCR, she called for support for the continuation of the generous policies of Uganda.

54. The representative of **Sweden** said his country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. Drawing attention to the atrocities committed against civilians by all warring parties in the Sudan, he emphasized the need for urgent further action and noted that the Sudan was one of Sweden's top recipients of humanitarian assistance in 2024 and was projected to remain so in 2025. He said Sweden supported the work of UNHCR on the route-based approach recognizing the spillover effects of the conflict in the Sudan in the region and beyond, including in Libya and Tunisia. He commended the efforts to promote a sustainable response and self-reliance as well as alleviate pressure on host countries such as Chad, Egypt and South Sudan. He said that Sweden would continue to advocate for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, respect for international humanitarian law, and safety for humanitarian personnel on the ground. He

highlighted the essential nature of UNHCR's protection mandate, including its efforts to prevent gender-based violence and ensure protection of the most vulnerable, including women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer refugees and minority groups. With famine underway, he stressed the imperative for all parties to assume their obligations under international humanitarian law and immediately facilitate access for aid organizations to communities in need.

55. He expressed concern about the scale of acute humanitarian needs in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, noting that it was the biggest recipient of humanitarian assistance in 2024 and was projected to remain among the top recipients for 2025. He said that resettlement remained a sustainable, safe, and organized way to offer international protection to refugees, as well as an act of solidarity with host countries. He said that in 2025, Sweden would continue its engagement for resettlement in collaboration with UNHCR and IOM, with priority given to women, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer refugees with a focus on the Great Lakes region, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda.

56. The representative of **the Sudan** said that since April 2023, over 11 million people had fled their homes, 3.5 million people had been displaced into neighbouring countries, and the resulting humanitarian crisis had left 26 million people in need of immediate humanitarian assistance. He appreciated efforts by the international community to respond to the crisis, including countries that were hosting Sudanese refugees, and asserted that the crisis would not end if assistance to militias was not suspended.

57. He reiterated the country's commitment to facilitate access for all humanitarian operations, underlining that despite the unprecedented crisis, the Sudan continued to receive thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries, with over 19,000 refugees arriving from neighbouring countries in 2024. He reiterated the appeal to the international community and donor countries to increase funding to the Sudan, as a shortfall in financing was making it difficult for the country to meet its growing needs in spite of a budget of \$6 billion, including \$4.2 billion to support operations within the Sudan and \$1.8 billion allocated to the regional refugee response plans.

58. The representative of **Japan**, with reference to the three regions in Africa, called on the international community to show solidarity with African countries who were faced with humanitarian crises borne out of the situation in the Sudan and the political unrest in West Africa. He noted that Japan had provided an initial contribution of \$17 million on 6 March 2025 to UNHCR in support of refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities in sub-Saharan Africa. He explained that the contribution would specifically support the organization's activities in Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, the Niger, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. He added that Japan also used the Global Refugee Forum 2023 to pledge support for refugees and host communities in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and Zambia and would report on its implementation at the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2025.

59. He recalled that many African countries participated in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus multi-stakeholder pledge and informed that Japan aimed to lead the multi-stakeholder discussions on the nexus to ensure that support from various actors was scaled up to support host communities, internally displaced persons and refugees. Furthermore, he commended efforts by UNHCR to establish a training eCentre for Africa to strengthen resilience and preparedness for future crises and reduce risks.

60. The representative of the **Netherlands (Kingdom of the)** said her country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. Relative to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she asserted that the Netherlands (Kingdom of the) continued to call for a diplomatic solution to the conflict and commended the organization for its role in protecting the most vulnerable in the situation. On the ongoing conflict in the Sudan, she expressed concern about the deteriorating humanitarian crisis and noted that unhindered humanitarian access was crucial to protect persons of concern.

61. Acknowledging several examples of sustainable responses in action in the region, she commended the generous policy of Uganda towards the refugees it hosted and encouraged Uganda and UNHCR to strengthen a sustainable responses model aimed at self-reliance and resilience of both host communities and refugees. She commended Ethiopia for advancing refugee inclusion, integrating refugees into national systems, and issuing refugee identity cards within the national identification system. She further welcomed the role of UNHCR in turning the sustainable responses approach into reality in parts of Ethiopia. She similarly commended the commitment Kenya to work towards the social and economic inclusion of refugees in host communities. She encouraged the Government of Kenya to reduce the backlog in refugee status determinations as well as the issuance and recognition of refugee documents for government and financial services and asked UNHCR to continue to provide support for the transformation.

62. The representative of **Finland** said his country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. He stated that Finland was alarmed by the situation in the Sudan and commended neighbouring countries for showing solidarity with those who were forced to flee and UNHCR for navigating the major hindrances to humanitarian assistance. Asserting that Finland fully supported efforts to find a political solution to the conflict, he urged all parties to the Sudan conflict to immediately cease hostilities and appealed to those funding and arming the belligerents to cease fuelling the conflict. He noted the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and said Finland was appalled by the rate of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and other serious human rights violations. Concerning conflicts in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other parts of Africa, he reiterated the call on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and prioritize the protection of civilians, including aid workers.

63. While acknowledging the unprecedented financial uncertainties faced by UNHCR, he asked the organization to leave no one behind, in particular children, persons with disabilities, or those fearing exclusion due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. He reaffirmed Finland's continued support for the work of organization, emphasizing that up to 80 per cent of its global funding in recent years to UNHCR had been flexible, including allocations to regional appeals in Africa, to allow the organization to respond swiftly to humanitarian needs.

64. The representative of **France** said her country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. She emphasized the need for an immediate ceasefire in the Sudan together with full, safe, and free humanitarian access under the Jeddah process. With respect to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, she noted that the operations of the M23 armed group had caused many deaths and displacements and called for an end to the fighting and a renewed engagement in mediation with support from the United Nations. In that regard, she advised that France was working together with Brazil, China, Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and the International Committee of the Red Cross on a global initiative for the respect of international humanitarian law.

65. Paying tribute to the work and commitment of UNHCR in all countries with refugees in the region, she encouraged the organization to continue reinforcing its learning on how the phenomenon of climate change aggravated risks so it could anticipate problems and adapt its work. She stressed that France, which was the fifth largest contributor to UNHCR in 2024, remained committed to work with the organization in 2025 and was trying to mobilize the international community for strong and effective multilateralism. She said that in April 2024, France collaborated with Germany and the European Union to organize a conference that pledged over €2 billion for the Sudan and its neighbouring countries.

66. The representative of the **United States of America**, in response to all regional and global updates, informed that the United States was conducting a review of its support to the United Nations. The United States was considering whether the actions of each organization, including UNHCR, were serving American interests and, if not, whether they could be reformed to do so. She said that the United States recognized the life-saving assistance provided through UNHCR, which was why it had issued waivers to its foreign assistance pause, allowing that important work to continue.

67. She stressed that the global community had to recognize that the scale and complexity of refugee needs had grown at a staggering pace. She emphasized that there had been an over-reliance on funding from the United States, so to meet the current needs around the world, more robust burden-sharing of international humanitarian assistance was critical, as was increased local integration in situations of protracted displacement.

68. She said that as part of collective efforts to enhance burden-sharing, there had to be a recognition of the responsibility of Member States to take back their nationals who did not have protection concerns. Access to asylum and protection for refugees was only possible with the availability of effective, efficient, and accountable ways to mitigate illegal immigration. She acknowledged that UNHCR played an essential part in the system by supporting credible asylum systems and providing life-saving assistance but also through supporting the repatriation of individuals when it was safe to do so. She urged UNHCR to commit to ensuring that refugees could safely return home as a lasting solution and to reduce the burden placed on receiving States. She reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to helping United Nations organizations realize their full potential and cautioned the organization to desist from championing divisive and dangerous cultural causes over the concerns of Member States, and focus on advancing efficiency, accountability, and transparency to demonstrate value for money.

69. The representative of **Norway** commended UNHCR for its efforts in enhancing protection, response and assistance in an increasingly volatile region and commended neighbouring countries for their continued act of solidarity by hosting millions of refugees and displaced people. Pointing to the alarming humanitarian consequences of the conflict in the Sudan, including the restriction on humanitarian access, and the continued reports of systematic conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, she stressed that the responsibility to respect international humanitarian law and facilitate access fell on the parties to the conflict, and called for urgent efforts to prevent sexual violence and offer protection and support to survivors.

70. She said that Norway was deeply concerned about the escalating violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. She deplored the widespread use of gender-based violence, forced recruitment and the use of child soldiers and called on parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. Acknowledging that funding cuts from major donors jeopardized protection for those at risk and assisting survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, she recalled that Norway remained a substantial donor and would continue to be a strong advocate for sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response through its leadership of the Call to Action on Prevention from Gender-Based Violence, where UNHCR was a valued member.

71. The representative of **Germany** said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. He stated that Germany was concerned about the extreme suffering and hunger in the Sudan and expressed further concern about what the proclamation of parallel governments by both parties to the conflict would entail for humanitarian access. He called for improved coordination within the United Nations system, including between UNHCR and IOM as well as with donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be prioritized in addressing the staggering needs. Appreciating the efforts of UNHCR and the willingness of neighbouring countries to host refugees, he informed that Germany would continue to support the organization and partners through its humanitarian engagements.

72. He noted the alarming developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that had resulted in the rapid deterioration of an already abysmal humanitarian crisis. The closure and destruction of camps for internally displaced persons in M23-controlled areas were unacceptable and had led to a surge in internally displaced persons and refugees, with refugee movements severely impacting neighbouring countries like Burundi. He informed that Germany was continuing to support refugee response in the region through its flexible funding and requested a stronger focus on integrated planning across the United Nations system with a focus on durable solutions from the start and unified communication, which would help donors and partners focus on the most urgent needs. He welcomed the launch of the Shirika plan and applauded Kenya for introducing the project, which focused on integrating refugees and creating new perspectives for both refugees and host communities.

He said that Germany continued to support the effort, including through development cooperation engagement. He said that the situation in Ethiopia was worrisome regarding the increase of conflict dynamics in Oromia and Amhara, and the slowing of returns of internally displaced persons in West Tigray, in particular.

73. He called for additional engagement, including strong cooperation between humanitarian, development and peace partners, on the deteriorating situation in Mozambique. He expressed support for the constructive and active role of the Mozambican Government in the process and assured that Germany would also support the respective national structures, including through development cooperation support.

74. He said that Germany was very concerned about the increasing restrictions of the humanitarian space, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, but also increasingly in Chad, and stressed the need to strengthen and defend humanitarian principles despite the difficult context. He stated that the Sahel region, including Chad, would remain one of Germany's top humanitarian priorities in 2025. He noted that it was crucial to focus on increasing the efficiency of the delivery of humanitarian assistance through an integrated and comprehensive humanitarian-development-peace nexus response by prioritizing the development of transition strategies in close coordination with national and international partners with durable solutions as the core focus. He welcomed the work around sustainable responses as an important step and asserted that it was time to accelerate and mainstream its implementation.

75. The representative of **Italy** said that her country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. She asserted that the partnership of Italy with African countries remained a priority in 2025, with a strong commitment to development, migration and asylum cooperation. She noted that the Mattei Plan, which introduced a peer-to-peer model, had been piloted in nine countries with the contribution of Italian authorities, businesses, NGOs, and local stakeholders. Alongside the Mattei Plan, the Rome Process was supporting African-led development to manage migration. She informed that in 2025, Italy and UNHCR would expand safe and legal pathways for refugees through the *Decreto Flussi*, allocating work permits for refugees and stateless persons. The 'Labour Corridors for Refugees' programme would further enable skilled refugees to fill labour shortages, demonstrating a new model for refugee labour mobility and integration.

76. She expressed concern about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and compliance with international law. She commended UNHCR leadership for coordinating the refugee response in Burundi and supporting displaced populations across the region. She noted that the conflict in the Sudan had forcibly displaced over 12 million people, making it the world's largest internal displacement crisis, with reports of conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary killings, and ethnic persecution causing alarm, and reiterated the call for the respect of international law and strengthened humanitarian access. She commended neighbouring countries hosting 3.3 million Sudanese refugees and supporting the regional refugee response plan of UNHCR.

77. She observed that the humanitarian crisis in West and Central Africa remained severe, with 14.9 million forcibly displaced persons, and escalating violence in the Sahel further restricting humanitarian access. She said Italy's engagement in the Sahel aligned with national and the European Union priorities, reinforcing stability through humanitarian and development efforts. She commended the role of UNHCR in mitigating protection risks, particularly along the Central Mediterranean route, and expressed Italy's support for the sustainable responses plan, emphasizing self-reliance, legal pathways and national inclusion frameworks.

78. The representative of **Belgium** said that her country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. She announced that Belgium provided flexible co-funding as an expression of its strong support for UNHCR and its mandate to assist refugees and internally displaced persons and encouraged other Member States to do the same. She asserted that co-funding was the best way to ensure that UNHCR could decide on structural action so that forgotten, underfunded crises would get the humanitarian response they required. She reiterated the support of Belgium for searching for sustainable solutions along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, building on the

commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum. She requested UNHCR to provide additional information on how the organization would cooperate on an inter-agency level to tackle new financial realities.

79. She emphasized the need to continue to demand an end to the catastrophic situation in the Sudan and provide humanitarian access to aid especially the most vulnerable people. She also underscored the need to take all necessary measures to protect and assist those affected by gender-based violence, especially in, but not limited to, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where due to the operations of M23, aided by Rwanda, the humanitarian situation and the lack of protection had reached intolerable levels. She stated that the centrality of protection was paramount and called for international humanitarian law to be the guiding compass.

80. The representative of **Canada** shared concerns expressed by other member States on the increased violence in the Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and condemned the escalating hostilities, the rise in sexual violence and violations of the rights of both internally and externally displaced persons. He urged UNHCR to respond to gender-based violence by deploying the gender-based violence information management system and working in partnership with women-led organizations. He noted the alarming situation in central Sahel, with displaced persons seeking refuge in the Gulf of Guinea. While reaffirming Canada's determination to work with UNHCR and all actors to address the complex challenges faced by the forcibly displaced, he highlighted the importance of de-escalating the conflicts and called on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and allow rapid and unhindered delivery of aid.

81. The representative of **Chad** stated that his country aligned itself with the statement by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group. He said Chad remained concerned by the number of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the region. He commended the commitment of UNHCR to remain a visible partner, respond to emergency situations and address the challenges that flow from a lack of security, and called on all partners to fully fund UNHCR for the work it does in the subregion. Reaffirming Chad's commitment to the fundamental principles of protection and non-refoulement, he stated that Chad's borders had remained open since the events in the Sudan began. Chad had strengthened the legal framework for refugees, adopting legislation on asylum, legal aid, civil status, biometric identity cards and the protection of internally displaced persons. He highlighted that the National Commission for Hosting and Integrating Refugees and Stateless Persons and UNHCR were continuing to address the challenges faced by over 1.8 million people forcibly displaced. Given the numbers hosted in the country, he asserted that investing in Chad meant investing in the Sahel region and all its refugees.

82. The representative of **Brazil** expressed concern over the recent escalation of tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the increase in the number of those forcibly displaced. He condemned the recent attacks on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) troops. He stressed that Brazil was also concerned about the ongoing conflict in the Sudan, which had led to a serious humanitarian crisis and the displacement of thousands of Sudanese.

83. The representative of the **Solidarity Initiative for Refugees speaking on behalf of NGOs** urged the international community, including the African Union and IGAD, to facilitate an immediate end to the conflicts in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to slow displacement figures. He further called on the international community to engage parties to the conflict to address the impunity of sexual violence and support the protection and safeguarding of those exposed to the violence, as well as timely and unfettered humanitarian access to meet life-saving needs. He requested donors to increase multi-year and flexible funding across the region, including direct funding to refugee-led organizations and for the media and international attention on the crises to be increased. He noted that refugee-hosting countries were often themselves navigating internal conflict and related internal displacement, high levels of food insecurity and poor economic opportunities, all compounded by climate shocks. He stated that in South Sudan, for instance, although 95 per cent of the population depended on land for their livelihood, it remained the second most

climate-vulnerable country globally. The forecasted drought in Ethiopia was also of particular concern, as 80 per cent of the rural population depended on rain-fed agriculture.

84. He said that although challenges remained, durable solutions for refugees, including opportunities for resettlement, were critical. He pointed out that some hosting countries were offering positive examples and lessons for including refugees in national development planning and implementation, such as Uganda's National Development Plan III, which allowed refugees to freely organize, form civil society organizations and provide essential services. He urged for continued support for such policies and the expansion of their implementation to ensure access to rights, registration and freedom of movement for all refugees. He welcomed Kenya's Shirika plan and its Refugee Act of 2021, which promised refugees freedom of movement, the right to work and access to financial services, among other rights. Coupled with plans to move away from encampments, the implementation of the Act will improve refugee economic inclusion and improve the per capita income of host communities.

85. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (UNHCR)** responding to questions and comments on climate change from Member States, as raised by Denmark, Ethiopia, Kenya and Switzerland, agreed that extreme weather conditions affecting populations were amplifiers of additional vulnerabilities for refugees and internally displaced persons in the region. He appealed for the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced persons, and refugee-hosting areas into national adaptation plans, as this was a precondition to seek increased support, including climate financing.

86. On root causes, as highlighted by the Africa Group, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, he made reference to the call by the High Commissioner to prioritize political solutions to the problems faced even with the limited humanitarian tools and thanked Member States for making use of the various tools at their disposal to find solutions at different levels. He informed that the organization was working with the United Nations Special Envoys for the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa region to ensure data sharing on the impact of the conflict. On the Global Refugee Forum pledges highlighted by several governments, including co-conveners like Japan and Uganda, he noted that pledge-matching was crucial. On resettlement, as highlighted by Australia, Kenya and Sweden, he said that resettlement and third-country solutions, as mentioned in the Global Refugee Forum and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, were vital. He noted that in 2024, as many as 30,000 people were resettled, marking a major difference in their lives, and underscored the need for increased resettlement quotas.

87. On the request by the representative of Switzerland for additional information on how UNHCR was engaging development actors, he said that the organization had supported host communities with \$2.4 billion, which was mobilized because regions, communities, districts and subregional entities were hosting refugees. He pointed to the generosity of the African Development Bank, which provided additional support for refugees and host communities, including recently in South Sudan. Bilateral development actors like the Canadian International Development Agency and the European Union had been supporting the organization's operations. On concerns raised about the decrease in enrolment rates and onward movement, he acknowledged that depriving children of education and a future contributed to instability, and encouraged Member States to strengthen the inclusion of refugees and people forced to flee in their national policies, including education systems.

(ii) *Southern Africa*

88. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa (UNHCR)** provided an overview of how countries in the region were meeting their international obligations to address forced displacement. She reported that the organization was revising the regional refugee response plan to reflect additional needs of more than 80,000 Congolese who had sought asylum across borders in the first few months of 2025. She advised that in addition to conflict-induced displacement, natural disasters had also significantly impacted southern Africa. In December 2024, Tropical Cyclone Chido affected several countries, including the Comoros, Madagascar, and Mozambique, causing widespread displacement and exacerbating the vulnerabilities of displaced populations. In northern Mozambique, UNHCR

supported the Government with preparation and response measures, such as training local disaster management committees and providing relief items. Elsewhere, the El Niño induced drought pushed many communities to the brink of food insecurity as crops dried up in Malawi and Zambia. She informed that through the partnership of UNHCR with the African Union's African Risk Capacity, a parametric insurance solution was implemented in Malawi, which meant that for the first time, refugees and host communities in and around Dzaleka refugee camp were able to receive a payout, allowing them to meet their basic needs. Efforts were underway to replicate that innovative partnership in other countries across the continent. She also noted that the SADC had made advancements in the tripartite partnership with the African Development Bank and UNHCR on the joint programme on addressing forced displacement, fragility mitigation, and climate resilience in southern Africa, allowing Member States to provide protection, support, and solutions from the onset of a crisis.

89. Acknowledging the financial challenges faced by the organization, she called for continued support to countries in the region who had hosted refugees for decades and where the relative stability had allowed for the advancement of sustainable responses, allowing refugees and host communities to thrive and for refugees to eventually no longer need assistance. In that regard, she stressed the need to invest in livelihood opportunities, noting that the funding challenges could lead to the organization running out of funds to help refugees buy food and essentials in countries like Botswana and Namibia, thereby exacerbating protection risks. Countries like Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe were investing in turning previously long-standing refugee settlements into economic opportunities. For example, Zambia, through its November 2023 National Refugee Policy Implementation Plan, aimed to transform long-standing refugee settlements into economic hubs, and in Zimbabwe, the self-reliance of refugees was being fostered through the cultivation of 125 hectares of agricultural land. Steady progress had also been made in several countries concerning the inclusion of refugees in national systems in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, and the region remained committed to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For instance, through the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, refugees in Malawi would gain access to clean and renewable energy technologies for cooking and lighting. Other legislative policy reforms, such as the review of the Refugee Act in Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe would create an enabling environment to foster sustainable responses.

90. Moreover, collaboration with development partners like the World Bank and the African Development Bank remained critical for sustainable responses. For example, projects in Mozambique and Zimbabwe were supporting livelihoods, private sector engagement, resilience efforts, and electricity. The aforementioned new National Refugee Policy in Zambia was supported by a World Bank International Development Association Grant approved last September, which provided resources for legal and policy harmonization, inclusion in a new national digital identity management system, and economic opportunities for refugees and the local communities. She noted that the aforementioned were all examples of the advancement of some of the 214 Global Refugee Forum pledges made by States and other stakeholders in the southern Africa region, half of which were at different stages of implementation. In addition, she reported that pledges made to address statelessness had achieved some milestones, including the adoption of national action plans to eradicate statelessness in the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, and Zambia. In November 2025, the Pan-African Parliament adopted the Resolution on Endorsement of the Draft Model Law on the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. She stated that UNHCR will support regional consultations on the model law before its anticipated adoption in the second half of 2025.

91. She emphasized that as the region prepared for the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2025, UNHCR would continue partnering with stakeholders in implementing the commitments made in tandem with enhancing the roll-out of the route-based approach and sustainable responses approach in the southern Africa region. She noted that the SADC-UNHCR high-level technical meeting held with Member States in December 2024 marked a significant step towards the operationalization of the route-based approach. Key recommendations made at the forum included enhancing data collection, strengthening asylum systems, and prioritizing protection and humanitarian assistance while combating human trafficking. Significant efforts had also been made to enhance data collection and

analysis, and as a result, over 40,000 refugees and registered asylum-seekers had been identified in mixed movements, mainly from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan moving towards Malawi, the Republic of the Congo, South Africa and Zambia. She stressed that engagement with local and refugee-led organizations remained a key commitment and would continue to be extremely important, as was evidenced by the critical role they played in highlighting protection challenges in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

92. The permanent representative of **Namibia** said that her country aligned itself with the statement by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group. Acknowledging the Secretariat's data which indicated that, as of the end of 2024, the southern African region was home to 9.7 million forcibly displaced persons due to conflict, disasters and health crises, the representative pointed out that that figure may have changed in light of recent developments in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. She informed that Namibia was vulnerable to climate shocks, such as the drought in 2024 and recent floods, and said that such challenges required coordinated responses to address immediate needs and focus on long-term solutions and resilience-building for affected communities. She commended UNHCR for its efforts to create a favourable protection environment for displaced individuals in southern Africa, focusing on strategic responses of route-based approaches to mixed movements and legal frameworks for refugee protection. She pointed to the southern Africa data platform as a way to enhance understanding of and response to mixed movement flows. She requested UNHCR to provide information on which other countries were included in the plan for 2025.

93. With respect to the legal frameworks for refugee protection, she commended the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique for pledging to incorporate the African Union Convention into their national laws and further commended Botswana, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe for their plans to enhance national legislation, stating that their efforts demonstrated a concerted effort to align national legislation with international standards to ensure improved protection for forcibly displaced persons. She noted that in 2024, efforts to realize the right to a safe environment prompted the Government of Namibia to begin issuing biometric identity documents for refugees, known as Guest of Africa Identity Cards. Those identity cards served as legal identification and allowed for forcibly displaced persons residing in Namibia to access vital services. She thanked donor partners who contributed through unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions and underscored Namibia's deep concern for the funding status of the approved budget for the southern Africa region, which stood at 10 per cent as of 31 January 2025. She requested information on efforts undertaken to ensure an increase in funding for the region.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.
