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High Commissioner's Programme**

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Summary record*, Tuesday, 11 March 2025, at 3.00 p.m.

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m.

1. The **Chairperson** informed the Committee that Panama had formally requested observer status for the current session, in line with the Executive Committee's decision on observer participation in Standing Committee meetings from October 2024 to October 2025.

It was so decided.

3. Regional activities and global programmes (resumed)

(a) Regional updates (resumed)

(ii) Southern Africa (resumed)

2. The representative of **Switzerland** emphasized that the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was a major driver of displacement, both internally and regionally. He reaffirmed Switzerland's commitment to monitoring the situation and supporting the humanitarian response. Referring to the UNHCR report where the region is described as a laboratory for socio-economic inclusion approaches with a strong focus on gender equality with support for return and reintegration, he praised the region's disaster impact management as a sign of its ability to implement innovative solutions.

3. Given these dynamics, he sought insights into lessons learned from ongoing initiatives, particularly those that could inform best practices and prevent mistakes in other regions. He inquired about existing experience-sharing mechanisms between Africa and other regions and asked whether the regional team is ready to disseminate its expertise globally to ensure successful approaches are adapted elsewhere.

4. The representative of **South Africa** aligned with the statement delivered by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group. She stressed the need for the international community to tackle the root causes of displacement and called for greater support for initiatives that reinforce political commitment to international humanitarian law, fostering dialogue to address conflicts that fuel displacement. She thanked the UNHCR Southern Africa Bureau for the regional update. She further commended it for its critical protection and assistance efforts and acknowledged the impact of conflict, persecution, human rights violations, and environmental hazards on displaced populations. She also praised the UNHCR international protection team for its engagement with South Africa and other States on mixed migration movements, emphasizing the need for inclusive, consultative processes involving countries of origin, transit, and destination to uphold fundamental rights.

5. Turning to environmental degradation, she highlighted the increasing vulnerability of communities in southern Africa to droughts, floods, and wildfires, worsened by climate change. She urged UNHCR to enhance collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, strengthening disaster risk reduction, preparedness, and resilience-building to mitigate both natural and human-made hazards. She also stressed the need to integrate anticipatory action into the UNHCR strategy, to ensure that disaster risk management aligned with State-led prevention plans. Prioritizing preparedness and risk reduction would better protect humanitarian populations and minimize climate-induced displacement impacts.

6. On funding for refugee-hosting countries, she criticized the undervaluation of Africa's in-kind contributions, such as land, infrastructure, and essential services. She warned that despite the rapid rise in displacement, funding was shrinking, leaving low and middle-income host States struggling with debt and post-pandemic recovery. She urged a more equitable burden-sharing approach, ensuring international solidarity and sustained financial support. To achieve durable solutions, she encouraged UNHCR to engage the private sector and development actors in fostering safe return and reintegration in countries of origin, aligning with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Finally, she reaffirmed South Africa's commitment to ensuring countries of origin actively participate in tackling the root causes of displacement.

7. The representative of **Uganda** reiterated her concern for arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and acknowledged the frequency of statements from key international partners and top donors on the importance of voluntary repatriation.

8. She stated that Uganda hosted 630,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with 30,000 additional asylum-seekers who had arrived in the past three months alone. The representative underscored the fundamental principle of international refugee law, which recognizes that those fleeing war-stricken countries are, in most cases, eligible for refugee status, as their very survival is at risk. With reference to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she stated that despite its vast natural resources, the country remained in a state of persistent insecurity, with over 100 localized armed groups operating across its territory, creating an extremely volatile environment. As a neighbouring country, Uganda had first-hand experience with these realities, engaging bilaterally with the Democratic Republic of the Congo on humanitarian and security matters.

9. The representative urged the international community to ensure that refugees are not pressured into returning prematurely, warning against the dangers of repatriation without sufficient guarantees of security, stability, and support. While Uganda, like any host country, would welcome the prospect of refugees returning to their homeland, she queried how people were expected to return to a place where their safety was at risk. She illustrated this concern by recalling hosting the High Commissioner in October 2024 in Uganda when he visited Rwamwanja refugee settlement and spoke with newly arrived refugees. Their testimonies were harrowing, recounting acts of torture, mutilation, and murder. She insisted that before repatriation can be seriously considered, the root causes of displacement must be addressed. This includes a clear commitment from all stakeholders, including host countries, donors, and humanitarian actors to secure conditions for safe and dignified returns. Without this, discussions on repatriation were said to remain premature and potentially harmful. The representative called upon the international community to stop fuelling conflicts, whether through direct involvement or by failing to act. She insisted on the fact that achieving sustainable peace required political courage, inclusive dialogue, and engagement with countries of origin, even where there were deep political disagreements or existing sanctions.

10. Drawing from regional experiences, she noted that Burundi had managed to facilitate some voluntary returns, offering a potential model to study. However, replicating such an approach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would require a far greater commitment from all stakeholders. Development and self-reliance cannot be meaningfully discussed while displacement is still actively increasing and when women and children are subjected to relentless violence, including rape, torture, and murder.

11. She reiterated that Uganda remains steadfast in its commitment to providing refuge as long as it receives the necessary support to sustain these efforts. Uganda reaffirmed its commitment to providing sanctuary to those in need, but called upon donors, humanitarian agencies, and political actors to step up and share the responsibility of protecting those fleeing violence and persecution.

12. The representative of the **Jesuit Refugee Services speaking on behalf of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** highlighted the severe underfunding of humanitarian operations in southern Africa, despite rising displacement from natural disasters, climate change, and conflict. The region, home to hundreds of thousands of refugees from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, remained largely overlooked. Host countries such as Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa struggled to provide protection and solutions due to shortages in resources. While UNHCR, regional organizations and NGOs had strengthened protection frameworks, she stated that mechanisms remained inadequate, leaving vulnerable populations without sufficient support. Displaced persons faced xenophobia, slow asylum processing, and restricted movement, which undermined their safety and resilience. She further stated that the lack of economic inclusion affected economies of host countries and the rights of refugees, depriving them of self-reliance opportunities.

13. The representative stressed that exclusion fuelled despair, eroded mental well-being, and deepened cycles of vulnerability. She highlighted that recent funding cuts had forced humanitarian groups to scale back essential services, worsened conditions for refugees and

internally displaced persons. Additionally, recent shifts in aid policies had heightened the need for urgent, sustained international funding. The representative emphasized the need to address inequalities in accessing services based on age, gender, and diversity, as marginalized groups, such as children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex individuals, suffer most in underfunded responses. A call was made to address the needs of these groups through financial support and tailored policies. Lastly, she encouraged Governments in the region to adopt policy reforms, strengthen regional cooperation, and integrate displaced persons into national education and healthcare systems. While recognizing other global crises, she stated that southern Africa must not be forgotten and called on donors to ensure displaced populations in the region receive the protection and dignity they deserve.

14. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa (UNHCR)** acknowledged the support expressed by the delegation to address the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She highlighted the recent escalation of violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which had led to mass displacement, worsening resource shortages and increased protection needs.

15. She informed that to address the crisis, UNHCR had launched a critical needs appeal in February 2025, seeking \$40.4 million for 500,000 displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries. She thanked the United Kingdom and other donors for their life-saving contributions and confirmed that an updated regional refugee response plan was forthcoming. She stressed that gender-based violence remained widespread, with women and girls disproportionately affected. The situation was exacerbated by poverty and weakened State institutions, leaving survivors without protection or justice. She informed that UNHCR had scaled up efforts, focusing on prevention, response, and support to survivors.

16. The Director cited weather-related disasters as a major driver for climate-induced displacement. She highlighted the partnership of UNHCR partnership with the African Development Bank and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on displacement, fragility mitigation, and climate resilience. She welcomed the support of Member States in expanding this initiative. With reference to Mozambique, she echoed the concerns of the European Union on Cabo Delgado's security and commended Mozambique for providing support to internally displaced persons and resuming the refugee status determination interviews. However, she warned that suspension of funds would jeopardize these efforts, especially as the new government was grappling with post-election violence. She stressed the chronic underfunding of southern Africa, cautioning that further cuts threatened stability, protection, and durable solutions. She reaffirmed the commitment of UNHCR to securing resources through partnerships with SADC and the African Development Bank.

17. She also thanked Denmark for advocating for flexible funding, emphasizing that flexible funds were more critical than ever for sustaining life-saving protection programmes. Regarding development partnerships, she highlighted the active engagement of UNHCR with regional actors, citing Zambia's refugee policy implementation with the World Bank and similar discussions in Malawi. She reaffirmed that sustainability was the only viable path, as echoed by several Member States, noting that southern Africa offered a stable foundation for inclusive policies and durable solutions. However, she drew attention to the fact that Governments alone would not be able to sustain these efforts and urged for continued global support. Responding to the query by Namibia on the movement data platform, she noted that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe would likely be included in the platform in 2025 and assured further updates would be shared as consultations continue. She thanked South Africa for its continued support and for hosting the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa.

18. On mixed migration movements, she outlined two major routes used by refugees: the Southern Africa route, from East and the Horn and the Great Lakes to South Africa, and the Western Indian Ocean route to the Comoros and Mayotte. She stated that these complex movements required coordinated responses from transit and destination countries. Finally, she praised the NGO community for its efforts in responding to forced displacement and

advocating for additional resources. She stressed the critical role of civil society in ensuring refugees in southern Africa receive the dignity and protection they deserve

(iii) *West and Central Africa*

19. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa (UNHCR)** stated that displacement was not just about statistics but represented real human struggles. In 2025, forcibly displaced persons in West and Central Africa were expected to reach 15.2 million, including 8.2 million internally displaced persons. He stressed that humanitarian responses must extend beyond immediate aid to foster self-reliance, inclusion, and stability for both displaced populations and host communities. He noted that with growing financial constraints, operational efficiency was critical. However, efficiency was not just resource management but was central to the protection and inclusion strategy of UNHCR. By integrating refugees into national health and education systems, displaced persons can transition from dependency to active participation.

20. He informed that interventions by UNHCR including cash-based assistance, centralized procurement, and biometric registration had improved transparency and reduced costs. In Chad, refugees were able to access national services, while in Burkina Faso, 83 hectares of land had been provided for livelihood opportunities. These initiatives bridge humanitarian aid and sustainable inclusion. On durable solutions, he reaffirmed the commitment of UNHCR to facilitating voluntary returns, with nearly 90,000 refugees repatriated, including 40,000 from the Niger to Nigeria, 17,000 Cameroonians from Chad, and over 20,000 Central Africans in 2024, with another 14,000 expected in 2025. However, returns must be coupled with stabilization efforts, including livelihood programmes, governance reforms, and essential services. In Birao (Central African Republic), UNHCR and UN-Habitat had launched a project to construct 100 homes, alongside investments in education and economic recovery.

21. On migration trends, he noted the growing complexity of movements, highlighting that Malians now form the largest group attempting to reach the Canary Islands. A cross-border approach is essential to address both root causes and protection needs along migratory routes. The route-based approach has enhanced reception systems, asylum procedures, and local inclusion while offering safer alternatives to dangerous journeys. UNHCR has expanded awareness campaigns to discourage risky migration and has invested in education and vocational training, including Chad's Mixed Movement Scholarship programme, which has supported 1,310 displaced youth in building sustainable futures.

22. Despite domestic challenges, countries in the region continued to show extraordinary generosity. Chad alone had received over 763,000 Sudanese refugees in under two years, while Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Niger continued to host over 4 million displaced persons amid rising insecurity. The Sahel crisis is spilling into coastal States, including Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, further straining resources and fuelling tensions. Nonetheless, Governments remain committed to protection. In February 2025, Ghana granted prima facie refugee status to asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso, ensuring legal protection and access to services. The Director highlighted the importance of regional cooperation, noting that platforms like the Lake Chad Governors' Forum and the Lomé Dialogue balanced security concerns with refugee protection. He informed that the Lomé Dialogue to be held in March 2025 would focus on border security, asylum procedures, and voluntary repatriation frameworks to reinforce regional stability and solutions.

23. Looking forward, the Director emphasized that efficiency, inclusion and stabilization were key to implementing sustainable responses in the region. Aligning humanitarian interventions with development goals would help move beyond short-term aid to long-term resilience.

24. The representative of **Zambia**, aligning with the statement delivered by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group, recognized conflict, climate disasters, and shifting asylum dynamics as key humanitarian challenges in southern Africa. He reaffirmed the commitment of Zambia to refugee protection, inclusion, and durable solutions. He informed that in keeping with the longstanding tradition of hospitality, Zambia was working with UNHCR and partners to integrate refugees into national systems through the National Refugee Policy

Implementation Plan. The Government aims to transform refugee settlements into economic hubs, ensuring that displaced populations and host communities benefit equitably.

25. On economic development, he underlined Zambia's prioritization of refugee self-reliance by enabling their participation in local markets and national industries. To this end, partnerships, including the World Bank's financing facility, were crucial in supporting host communities and refugees alike. On climate resilience, Zambia declared a national disaster in response to the 2024 drought, and he welcomed the climate-smart infrastructure and agricultural initiatives of UNHCR, which benefitted both refugees and host communities, and supported strengthening disaster preparedness to mitigate future environmental shocks.

26. The representative highlighted Zambia's support of legal harmonization for refugee protection, aligning with the Global Compact on Refugees and said it remains engaged in regional mixed migration strategies and with SADC to enhance displacement responses. Despite Zambia's firm commitment, challenges persisted, requiring sustained international support, including sufficient financial and technical backing to make refugee settlements succeed as economic hubs. He stressed the need for stronger funding mechanisms, such as the World Bank's financing facility, to ensure the needs of both refugees and host communities are met.

27. On climate-induced displacement and food security, he expressed support for climate-smart agriculture programmes aligned with Zambia's national adaptation strategies and cross-sectoral coordination to address water scarcity and land degradation. On border security and instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he expressed his government's commitment to an open-door policy while stressing the need for enhanced border management, stronger security measures, and safeguards against trafficking and armed groups.

28. He stated that integrating refugees into national education and healthcare systems remained a challenge due to constraints such as shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure and limited education materials. Similarly, achieving universal healthcare access for refugees required greater collaboration with UNHCR and international partners. While noting the existing challenges, he reiterated his Government's commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of displaced populations but called for increased international support, particularly in economic empowerment, climate adaptation, and service delivery, and underlined the importance of regional cooperation.

29. The representative of **Austria** said his country aligned with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States, reaffirmed Austria's commitment to humanitarian cooperation in Africa, and emphasized strengthening partnerships with African countries and UNHCR as a priority. Addressing the humanitarian crisis in the Sudan, he highlighted the urgent need for assistance, particularly for the 2.9 million children suffering from acute malnutrition and over 3 million displaced persons, many of whom had fled the country. He called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

30. He condemned escalating violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly by M23 in North and South Kivu. Austria urged Rwanda to withdraw its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and called for accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

31. Expressing concern over the growing tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia, he noted the fragile security situation in Ethiopia and the persistent obstacles posed by natural disasters and conflict while commending the country's long-standing role in hosting over one million refugees. On Somalia and the Sahel, he stressed the need to strengthen the Somali security sector and called for greater international commitment to address rising violence, human rights violations, and declining humanitarian aid in the Sahel.

32. Moreover, he welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to prioritize the protection of women and girls, advocating for accountability, partnerships with women-led organizations, and direct financial support mechanisms. He further underscored the importance of ensuring education access and expressed interest in the efforts of UNHCR to support persons with disabilities.

33. The representative also welcomed South Sudan's accession to the United Nations Conventions on Statelessness and the Pan-African Parliament's endorsement of the Model Law on Nationality and Statelessness, recognizing these as critical steps in addressing statelessness. Finally, he reaffirmed Austria's financial commitment to humanitarian efforts, noting its 2024 contribution of 3.8 million euros to UNHCR operations in Africa.

34. The representative of **Cameroon** welcomed the work of UNHCR in the field and its continuous support, acknowledging the challenges posed by the presence of refugees and displaced persons, particularly in fragile States. Despite these difficulties, she stated that Cameroon remains committed to ensuring that refugees and internally displaced persons can live in dignity, even in the face of climate change-related challenges.

Emphasizing her government's commitment to protecting vulnerable populations, the representative highlighted ongoing efforts to ensure their well-being, care, and support while promoting durable solutions and fundamental freedoms within an inclusive and sustainable development framework grounded in sovereignty and the rule of law. She underscored the determination of the government to restore stability and normalcy with the support of the United Nations and the international community, stressing the importance of sustainable solutions.

35. The representative outlined the reconstruction plan initiated through the Great National Dialogue, which aims to restore living conditions for those affected by years of crisis. This initiative, undertaken in collaboration with international partners, focuses on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of basic infrastructure to facilitate access to education, the rebuilding of health infrastructure, economic recovery, and, above all, the return to peace. While acknowledging progress in supporting displaced communities, she stressed the need for continuous improvement in protection and assistance efforts for vulnerable populations. She further emphasized the importance of constructive dialogue in building a fair and inclusive future for all, reaffirming Cameroon's commitment to seeking sustainable solutions and calling on UNHCR to continue its support in this endeavour.

36. The representative of **Switzerland** emphasized that while statistical comparisons may suggest that West and Central Africa are less affected by displacement than East Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes region, the reality is far more complex. Beyond quantitative data, what defines this region is the multiplicity of crises, from internal conflicts of varying nature to the reception of refugees from other parts of the continent and the increasing prevalence of mixed migration movements towards Europe. These overlapping challenges necessitate a tailored and adaptive response, ensuring that humanitarian and development efforts remain context-specific and responsive to emerging needs.

37. In this regard, the High Commissioner's efforts to adapt approaches according to the unique dynamics of each crisis were acknowledged as a critical step forward. The representative inquired about the effectiveness of cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), particularly in the context of shaping public policies that impact displaced populations and host communities. Given the vital role that national budget allocations play in ensuring sustainable protection and support, the extent to which joint strategies between UNHCR and the IMF influence fiscal policies and national budgetary decisions was highlighted as an area of particular interest.

38. Turning to efforts to promote refugee self-reliance, the representative underscored the importance of ensuring that displaced populations can access land and resources, fostering sustainable livelihoods and reducing long-term dependency on humanitarian aid. He encouraged the High Commissioner's continued engagement in protection programming and sought further insights into the key factors that have contributed to the success of land allocation initiatives. He also asked about complementary activities that should be prioritized to ensure that local populations also benefit sustainably from these initiatives, preventing tensions and fostering social cohesion between host communities and displaced persons.

39. In closing, he reaffirmed Switzerland's commitment to supporting durable solutions and effective policies that not only enhance protection but also contribute to long-term stability and economic inclusion in West and Central Africa. He expressed eagerness to continue engaging with UNHCR to explore ways in which international financial and

humanitarian institutions can better align their strategies to create sustainable and inclusive responses for forcibly displaced populations.

40. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa (UNHCR)** emphasized the importance of sustainable approaches in addressing forced displacement in the region, particularly in coastal countries implementing the out-of-camp policy. He reaffirmed the relevance of this strategy while highlighting the growing number of Burkinabe refugees in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. He stressed that for the out-of-camp policy to be effective, it needed to be embedded within long-term resilience-building efforts. He underscored the need for socio-economic inclusion, crisis prevention and strengthened protection mechanisms, particularly through biometric registration, which ensures aid reaches those in need while addressing security concerns.

41. He acknowledged the contribution by Japan to the efforts of UNHCR in the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, and the Niger and highlighted the impact of the investment by Japan in the e-Centre for Africa to enhance regional protection capacity. Turning to concerns of gender-based violence in Chad, he highlighted the risks faced by Sudanese refugee women and girls due to economic dependence and insecurity, emphasizing the urgent need for greater funding, as current resources only met 25 per cent of the protection needs.

42. The Director commended Cameroon for its continued support of Central African and Nigerian refugees, as well as its leadership in the Central African Republic Solutions Support Platform, which aims to facilitate the voluntary return of 300,000 refugees by 2028. He underscored the importance of sustainable reintegration and the need for further resources to expand development hubs, particularly in light of the 24,000 returns in 2024 and an expected 40,000 in 2025. Mentioning Cameroon's only refugee camp, Minawao, which hosts 80,000 Nigerian refugees, he noted the need for alternative solutions due to land and economic constraints. With European Union support, efforts are underway to transform the region into an economic hub and establish 'opportunity villages' to promote refugee self-reliance.

43. Regarding the situation in Nigeria, he reiterated the position of UNHCR that closure of camps for internally displaced persons must be voluntary, safe, and dignified, ensuring sustainable solutions that prevent further displacement. Regarding Chad, he acknowledged the burden of hosting large numbers of refugees, with planning figures for 2025 estimating an additional 250,000 Sudanese arrivals. He commended Chad's Plan National de Réponse à l'Aide, which aims to coordinate national and international response efforts.

44. The Director outlined efforts undertaken by UNHCR on climate action in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, and Nigeria, including sustainable shelters, land rehabilitation, and climate-smart agriculture initiatives. He also emphasized the importance of partnerships with the African Development Bank, the IMF, and the World Bank, to ensure greater fiscal space for Sahel governments, particularly Burkina Faso, which is investing in its own response but still requires significant external support.

45. He concluded by reaffirming the importance of long-term investment in displaced populations and host communities. He called for stronger engagement with the private sector to ensure that access to land and services translates into economic opportunities, underscoring the necessity of sustainable solutions that go beyond emergency aid.

(iv) *The Americas*

46. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for the Americas (UNHCR)** provided an update on the unprecedented displacement crisis affecting over 20 million people in the region. He cited conflict, political instability, violence, and natural disasters as key drivers and noted shifting migration trends, particularly a growing number of returns southward since September 2024. Despite progress made in sustainable responses, political, financial, and operational challenges threatened ongoing support for displaced populations.

47. He outlined three main areas of progress. First, protection mechanisms have been strengthened, with many States implementing legal residency solutions. UNHCR-backed asylum system reforms now approve 80 per cent of applications, with accelerated decisions under the Cartagena Process. Second, regularization programmes have benefited 4.5 million

people, granting legal residency and access to the labour market and essential services. Countries, including Colombia, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua, are adopting new frameworks to aid returnees. Third, socio-economic integration efforts have been bolstered, notably through Brazil's Welcome Programme (or *Operação Acolhida*), which resettled 140,000 refugee families in 1,000 municipalities, and Mexico's integration initiative, securing 150,000 employment contracts for refugees.

48. The Director praised international financial institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank, the IMF and the World Bank, which invested \$5.4 billion in social and economic inclusion programmes, contributing to the stabilization of 84 per cent of displaced populations within Latin America and the Caribbean and reducing onward migration. Studies by the IMF and World Bank showed that migrants contributed up to 0.3 per cent growth in the gross domestic product of their host countries, underlining their economic value.

49. Despite these gains, he cautioned that the regional strategy was at risk with security and political threats undermining stability, and resettlement phaseouts reducing the protection options, especially for women and children. Funding shortages threaten regularization efforts and increase the risks of xenophobia and irregular migration. He stated that without sustained support, 1.2 million people would be left without aid, as 70 per cent of planned activities under the Regional Platform for Refugees and Migrants (known as R4V) were cancelled or delayed. He urged development actors and financial institutions to maintain international support, stressing that bilateral and multilateral cooperation were vital. He stressed that the Chile Declaration and Action Plan, a key milestone in regional coordination, must be followed up with concrete commitments, ensuring alignment with the Global Refugee Forum and sustained stakeholder engagement.

50. The representative of **Colombia** underscored ongoing challenges in Colombia, particularly due to armed conflict, rising violence, and natural disasters. In Catatumbo, violence had led to hundreds of deaths and the mass displacement of minors. Despite these challenges, Colombia remained committed to its open-door policy, regularizing millions of migrants, including 3 per cent with refugee status.

51. She reaffirmed Colombia's responsibility to protect migrants and refugees, stressing that human rights obligations require international solidarity. She acknowledged the recognition by UNHCR of Colombia's efforts in healthcare, social security, and integration but emphasized that Colombia could not manage this crisis alone with 70 per cent of humanitarian aid being frozen, affecting over 1 million people, with projections of 1.5 million in the near future. Cuts have also impacted gender equality, women's empowerment, and environmental programmes, leaving major projects unfunded. To mitigate this, she urged more efficient resource use, stronger coordination by the United Nations, and regional policy alignment, highlighting how the Chile Declaration and Action Plan offers a framework for collective action, ensuring strategic responses to humanitarian challenges.

52. The representative of the **European Union, speaking on behalf of its member States**, expressed deep concern over the displacement crisis in the region, driven by political instability, violence, economic fragility, and natural disasters. She commended the protection efforts of UNHCR and emphasized the need for continued regional coordination. The following regional processes were highlighted, including the Cartagena+40 Process and Chile Declaration, which were acknowledged as significant milestones, and the International Technical Meeting on the Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region (known as the Quito Process), to which the commitment of UNHCR was appreciated.

53. The European Union called for stronger regional coordination mechanisms to address multiple crises and ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups. On Venezuelan refugees, the European Union reaffirmed support for asylum countries, particularly Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, amidst heightened protection risks following recent elections in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. She urged UNHCR to continue its work aimed at strengthening protection frameworks to prevent deportations. She highlighted the need for improvements in the Regional Platform for Refugees and Migrants following a review funded by the European Union that recommended process simplifications, better coordination, and streamlined humanitarian assessments to enhance efficiency and responsiveness.

The European Union also voiced concerns over deportation risks, particularly in Mexico, where asylum-seekers face increased threats. The representative urged ongoing collaboration with UNHCR to ensure strong advocacy responses.

54. She highlighted the worsening humanitarian conditions in Ecuador, Haiti and Nicaragua. The representative also reaffirmed the European Union's support for peace efforts in Colombia, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Catatumbo. Finally, she praised the commitment of UNHCR to inclusion, ensuring that women, children, and marginalized groups remain at the forefront of protection efforts.

55. The representative of **Ecuador** reaffirmed Ecuador's commitment to protecting refugees, emphasizing its tradition of hosting, regularizing, and integrating displaced persons. The country issued 30,000 stay permits, reflecting solidarity and shared responsibility while ensuring protection for vulnerable groups, particularly children and youth. Ecuador has launched notable initiatives, including the Breathe Inclusion programme, which provided protection to 150 children, and the Albert Einstein Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI), granting access to higher education to 150 refugees. These efforts align with Ecuador's broader strategy of ensuring not just legal protection but also opportunities for long-term inclusion. He called for unity, urging countries, donors, financial institutions, and private sector actors to increase their efforts in ensuring protection, integration, and sustainable opportunities for displaced populations.

56. The representative of **Switzerland** acknowledged the success of regional integration efforts, emphasizing their benefits for both displaced persons and host communities. He noted that long-term solutions are more effective than short-term aid, raising questions on how best practices from the Americas region can be adapted globally. He enquired whether host countries can lead integration processes alone or would require sustained international support, highlighting the importance of knowledge-sharing across regions.

57. Focusing on regional cooperation, he praised the progress made through collective responses but questioned their sustainability amid potential funding reductions. He asked if the private sector could offset declining donor support, playing a larger role in financing integration programmes. He also highlighted the success of integration models in Brazil, Chile and Mexico and urged for further discussions on how to apply these lessons in other regions.

58. The representative of **Brazil** underscored the essential role of UNHCR in assisting countries facing unprecedented displacement and mixed migration flows. He referred to Brazil's Operation Welcome (or *Operação Acolhida*) which had resettled 21,000 Venezuelan nationals in 1,070 cities through a multi-stakeholder approach involving the International Organization for Migration, UNHCR, and civil society. He informed that Brazil had pioneered inclusive policies, including its National Policy on Migration, Asylum, and Statelessness, developed through broad consultations involving over 4,000 stakeholders. The policy will establish centers for assistance and integration, enhancing the social, cultural and economic rights of displaced persons. He also highlighted the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024-2034, which will guide regional cooperation under the Cartagena+40 Process.

59. Regarding Venezuelan displacement, Brazil has granted refugee status to 132,000 Venezuelans and temporary residency to 479,000, with 94,000 arrivals in 2024 alone. The representative highlighted a key issue in the update provided by UNHCR: most forcibly displaced persons remain within Latin America and the Caribbean, yet funding gaps persist compared to Europe. With growing displacement in Central America and Mexico, he urged greater international financial support to strengthen national reception systems.

60. The representative of **Uruguay** reaffirmed Uruguay's strong commitment to international refugee law, acknowledging challenges in asylum capacity but viewing them as opportunities for institutional improvement. Uruguay has launched a capacity-building programme to enhance asylum processing and reduce its backlog of 31,000 pending applications. UNHCR and international cooperation partners have been instrumental in strengthening Uruguay's asylum system, ensuring expanded access to protection. He highlighted that the country continues to implement programmes that facilitate regularization and maintain an accessible refugee status determination process for new arrivals.

61. The representative of **Canada** acknowledged the complexity of displacement in the Americas, driven by violence, persecution, human rights violations, natural disasters, and climate change. While recognizing strong political will and regional solidarity, he highlighted ongoing challenges in ensuring sustainable responses. He underlined the importance Canada ascribes to leadership through regional frameworks, including the Quito Process, the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (known by its Spanish acronym as MIRPS), and the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action 2024-2034 under the Cartagena+40 Process, which are critical to protecting rights and fostering socio-economic inclusion. He, however, expressed concerns of rising security risks, restrictive migration policies, and xenophobia. In light of this, he expressed Canada's interest in additional information on the assessment of UNHCR of persisting legal and policy barriers that hinder displaced persons' access to protection and durable solutions, including through the work of UNHCR on the route-based approach, as well as recommendations for donor engagement in addressing these challenges. Stressing a human rights-based approach to migration and asylum policy, he emphasized the need for the dignified treatment of deported migrants and returnees, with proper reintegration, reception, and medical access.

62. The representative of the **Holy See** cited Pope Francis' warning about the global displacement crisis, emphasizing a decline in fraternity and solidarity as violence, persecution, and forced displacement escalate. He underlined the right to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, stressing the duty of Member States to uphold protections under the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. He raised concerns over migrants being criminalized based on irregular status, urging a distinction between migration and criminality. Emphasizing dignity and integration, he condemned perceptions of refugees as burdens and urged recognition of their potential contributions. Commending socio-economic inclusion efforts, he stressed the role of faith-based organizations as frontline responders. He called for global unity, strengthened partnerships, and non-discriminatory policies to ensure protection and sustainable solutions for displaced persons.

63. The representative of **Mexico** emphasized the growing complexity of displacement in the Americas, noting that shifting political will is straining national reception and protection systems. With over 20 million displaced persons, international cooperation and sustained support are crucial. She reaffirmed Mexico's commitment to legal pathways and regional collaboration, stressing that the crisis cannot be managed by individual States alone but requires a shared responsibility approach.

64. The representative of **Spain** commended host countries' efforts in providing protection and durable solutions, reaffirming support for the Quito Process, MIRPS, and the Chile Plan of Action under Cartagena+40. Spain welcomed the adoption of the Chile Declaration, highlighting its importance for regional cooperation. He expressed concern over displacement from Haiti, Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, praising countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, and Uruguay for regularizing and integrating migrants.

65. He stressed that migration routes remain dangerous, urging enhanced cooperation to integrate humanitarian and development responses. He welcomed Costa Rica's role in regional migration governance, including its new leadership role in MIRPS. Supporting innovative solutions, including labour integration, circular migration, and resettlement programmes, he highlighted Costa Rica's pilot project for Nicaraguans as a model for regional expansion. Expressing concern over the funding shortfall facing UNHCR, he noted that only 9 per cent of the \$815 million budget for 2025 had been funded, urging increased international contributions.

66. The representative of **Peru**, referring to the displacement crisis in the Americas region, decried its effects on some 20.3 million people, including 8 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants. Peru, the second-largest host of Venezuelans, shelters 1.66 million individuals and is strengthening institutional capacity to align responses with international protection standards. She noted that 500,000 Venezuelans have sought refugee status, with 7,200 officially recognized. To improve asylum processing, Peru inaugurated a new headquarters for its refugee commission in Lima, supported by UNHCR. However, financial constraints remain a major challenge, requiring greater international cooperation. She

emphasized the need for tailored, case-specific solutions and welcomed the Chile Declaration as a milestone in regional cooperation.

67. The representative of **Chile** reaffirmed her government's commitment to regional cooperation, emphasizing the principles of political will, solidarity, and shared responsibility in addressing displacement. Chile has played a key role in the adoption of the Chile Declaration and Plan of Action (2024-2034), a framework addressing protection, inclusion, and displacement prevention. She also underlined Chile's continued focus on implementing follow-up mechanisms under Cartagena+40, calling for financial and technical support from donors, the private sector, and civil society. She highlighted the need for self-reliance among displaced populations, emphasizing the humanitarian, development and peace nexus and stronger inter-agency collaboration and structured dialogue within the United Nations system. She also announced Chile's decision to join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, reaffirming her government's commitment to sustainable solutions for displaced persons.

68. The representative of the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** expressed gratitude for the comprehensive report provided by UNHCR on the Americas and reaffirmed the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's commitment to the protection of refugees and the human rights of all Venezuelans. He raised concerns regarding the characterization of Venezuelans' reasons for migrating, stating that there is no armed conflict or persecution in Venezuela, and that categorizing Venezuelans as refugees constitutes a misrepresentation. He further asserted that the narrative surrounding Venezuelan migration had been politicized, particularly through the dissemination of exaggerated figures, such as the claim that 7.2 million Venezuelans have migrated.

69. Highlighting the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's long-standing tradition as a host country, the representative emphasized that millions of people from various parts of the world have found dignity, employment, and integration in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, without the need for camps. He stated that economic progress in the country has enabled the launch of voluntary return programmes, which have facilitated the return of thousands of Venezuelan migrants seeking to benefit from national development efforts. He emphasized that migrants should have the freedom to return home without political or media manipulation and urged UNHCR to adhere strictly to its mandate.

70. The representative of **Germany** aligned with the statement made by the European Union while reaffirming Germany's national commitment to addressing displacement in the Americas. Expressing deep concern over the dangers facing refugees and migrants, especially in the Darién Gap, he commended host countries for their protection efforts. Acknowledging shrinking humanitarian budgets, he stressed Germany's role as a key humanitarian partner while emphasizing burden-sharing to meet growing needs. Germany urged stronger coordination by the United Nations, improved operational capacity, and efficient aid delivery. Finally, he called for long-term, sustainable solutions, ensuring a comprehensive response to displacement in the region.

71. The representative of **Panama** addressed the ongoing challenges of forced displacement and mixed migratory movements in the region. He highlighted a shift in migration dynamics in 2025, marked by an increase in returns to the south, a development influenced by evolving migration policies in destination countries. This shift underscored the pressing need to reinforce reception and reintegration mechanisms in countries of origin. As of 6 March 2025, the number of individuals crossing the Darién Gap northward had significantly declined, with only 1,700 people recorded, in stark contrast with previous years. This decline was largely attributed to recent changes in the migration policies of the United States of America, which have had direct repercussions on regional migration patterns.

72. In response to these developments, Panama reached an agreement in February 2025 to receive individuals deported from the United States who originate from countries without direct deportation agreements. These returnees have been accommodated in designated facilities within Panama, placing additional humanitarian and logistical pressures on national systems. He emphasized the challenges posed by this arrangement, calling for enhanced international cooperation to support Panama's efforts in managing the evolving migration landscape.

73. He highlighted Panama's and Costa Rica's joint mechanism, established in February 2025, to address the needs of migrants in transit, particularly those returning to their countries of origin after being unable to secure asylum elsewhere. This bilateral coordination effort aims to protect displaced persons who are victims of human trafficking and to ensure their safety throughout their journey.

74. Addressing the evolving needs of displaced populations, he emphasized the growing challenge of reorganizing reception centres, particularly to accommodate an increasing number of unaccompanied minors. To strengthen protection measures, Panama reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding displaced persons, bolstering international cooperation to improve reception conditions, ensuring the safety and well-being of minors, and combating xenophobia through awareness campaigns. Underscoring Panama's dedication to regional cooperation, he stressed the importance of working closely with neighbouring States to ensure a sustainable and effective response to migration challenges.

75. The representative of **El Salvador** expressed appreciation for the efforts of UNHCR in supporting refugees, stressing the urgency of international cooperation to address displacement root causes and ensure protection. Commending the role of UNHCR in managing migration flows with dignity, she acknowledged successful integration programmes supported by agencies, public authorities, and communities. El Salvador had seen a 30 per cent rise in asylum seeker arrivals in 2024, reinforcing the need to align national mobility policies with international protection standards. She highlighted how, in collaboration with UNHCR, the government had strengthened its asylum system, including a Refugee Assistance Center, an information technology system for asylum processing, and revised legal frameworks. Awareness campaigns and border official training were launched to ensure accessibility to asylum. She highlighted the "My First Job" programme, which secured employment for 1,000 displaced persons with support from 200 enterprises and the expansion of livelihood opportunities through private-sector collaboration.

76. The representative of the **Hemispheric Network for Haitian Migrants' Rights**, speaking on behalf of NGOs described the worsening displacement crisis, citing rising humanitarian needs, legal barriers, and security risks. Violations of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees were noted, and the Darién Gap was flagged as a major human trafficking corridor. He urged for the strengthening of safe migration pathways, funding increases and enhanced State-NGO cooperation.

77. He emphasized the importance of a gender-sensitive asylum approach, noting barriers for women, girls, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons in seeking protection. Many remain excluded due to documentation hurdles and policy gaps, leaving them without work permits or legal status. He also expressed concern over the Haitian crisis, citing discrimination, language barriers, and inadequate asylum access, urging stronger legal protections, as well as the restrictive asylum policies in Mexico and United States aid cuts, leading to the suspension of vital programmes. He requested expanded legal pathways, regional legal frameworks, and increased civil society involvement. Special attention was called to Haitian asylum seekers, gender-based violence victims, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, stressing greater financial commitments for inclusive asylum policies.

78. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for the Americas (UNHCR)** thanked Chile, El Salvador and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for their statements, commending political will in advancing asylum programmes and economic inclusion. He warned that shrinking humanitarian budgets require innovative funding solutions and stronger international partnerships to sustain progress. He acknowledged Colombia's significant efforts, particularly in Catatumbo, where conflict has displaced thousands. He referred to UNHCR's continued support for reintegration and regularization efforts, recognizing Colombia as a regional model through the Quito Process. Brazil's leadership in protection and inclusion was also commended, particularly in hosting the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2030, which will highlight climate-related displacement solutions.

79. The Director praised Mexico's asylum system enhancements and called for greater global cooperation to support host countries. He highlighted Peru's modernization of asylum procedures, Chile's Cartagena+40 leadership and El Salvador's reintegration programmes.

He reaffirmed the support of UNHCR for Panama in responding to Darién Gap humanitarian needs. Addressing the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's concerns about returnees, he stressed that returns must be safe, dignified, and sustainable, with a focus on reintegration. He thanked key donors, including Canada, the European Union, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, the United States of America, and, for their policy and financial support.

80. Regarding Switzerland's inquiries, he reiterated the importance of favourable protection environments, private sector engagement, and pragmatic solutions, pledging continued collaboration. Regarding Haitian migration, he acknowledged Haiti as a priority, citing recent UNHCR missions with the Assistant High Commissioner, working with the United Nations and Haitian authorities to assess protection needs. The Director reaffirmed the commitment of UNHCR to guaranteeing asylum fairness, non-refoulement, and temporary protection for Haitians. He praised the structured Haitian integration approach by Brazil, recognizing it as a model for inclusive policies. He concluded by commending UNHCR for its dedication to strengthening protection, coordination, and humanitarian responses across the Americas.

(v) *Asia and the Pacific*

81. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (UNHCR)** provided an update on operations in the region, highlighting the unprecedented scale of displacement and the urgent need for sustained humanitarian and development assistance. She emphasized that the Asia and the Pacific region currently hosts the highest number of displaced persons ever recorded, with 7 million refugees, most of whom remain in protracted situations with limited access to durable solutions.

82. She underscored the critical situation in Bangladesh, where Rohingya refugees continue to depend entirely on humanitarian aid. During her recent visit with the High Commissioner, she engaged with refugee women and girls, who expressed both their aspirations for the future and their growing concerns over deteriorating conditions in the camps. She warned of severe funding shortages, noting that from April onwards, the United Nations World Food Programme will be forced to cut food rations in half, exacerbating food insecurity, malnutrition, and protection risks for refugees and host communities. In response, UNHCR has been preparing to launch the Rohingya Humanitarian Response Plan, in coordination with senior Bangladeshi officials.

83. Turning to Myanmar, she described the situation as dire, with ongoing violence and conflict preventing the safe and voluntary return of refugees. Over 3.5 million Rohingya refugees are now in exile, with no immediate prospects for repatriation. Despite significant operational challenges, UNHCR reached over 1 million displaced persons in Myanmar last year, demonstrating the commitment and resilience of its staff in extremely difficult conditions. However, funding shortfalls threaten to disrupt essential humanitarian programmes, with 300,000 displaced people at risk of losing access to shelter and other basic needs in 2025.

84. With no viable solutions in sight, many Rohingya refugees have resorted to dangerous journeys by sea. In 2023 alone, at least 9,200 Rohingya, primarily women and children, attempted perilous maritime crossings. Indonesia has played a critical humanitarian role in receiving many of these refugees, and the Director expressed deep appreciation for the Indonesian government and its people. She urged neighbouring countries to continue to provide refuge to those fleeing the conflict while calling for collective international efforts to ensure the protection of refugees and advocate for conditions that enable a safe and dignified return.

85. The Director turned to the protracted crisis in Afghanistan, where millions of Afghan refugees remain in neighbouring countries, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. During her recent visits to both countries, she held constructive discussions with government officials and partners on the urgent challenges posed by large refugee populations. She acknowledged the significant strain on host countries, which have provided longstanding support for Afghan refugees. However, she made a strong appeal for continued

protection, stressing that Afghans must not be forcibly returned until conditions allow for voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation.

86. Inside Afghanistan, the humanitarian situation remains dire, compounded by restrictive edicts from de facto authorities, particularly affecting women's and girls' rights. She noted the mass deportations from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, with 1.6 million Afghans forcibly returned in 2024, further straining Afghanistan's fragile reintegration capacity. Given these challenges, UNHCR is prioritizing protection and assistance for returnees, particularly women and girls, while also implementing cash-based interventions to provide immediate relief and supporting shelter and livelihood programmes to promote stability. In 2024, UNHCR assisted over 1.7 million people in Afghanistan, more than half of whom were women and girls. However, she warned that additional urgent funding is required to sustain these efforts. To enhance global attention and mobilize resources for Afghan refugees, UNHCR is working to strengthen the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees support platform. The Director took the opportunity to thank the Netherlands for its leadership as Chair of the Platform, recognizing the country's commitment to coordinating international responses.

87. In light of funding constraints, UNHCR has been actively optimizing its operational footprint in the region. In Sri Lanka, operations were scaled down in 2024, aligning with the country's evolving needs after 37 years of collaboration since the civil conflict. In Afghanistan, UNHCR has restructured its presence to maximize impact despite limited resources. Across the region, UNHCR is also consolidating offices and co-locating with other United Nations agencies, ensuring greater efficiency and collaboration.

88. Recalling the commitment by UNHCR to ending statelessness, she emphasized the progress made in several countries. She highlighted that Turkmenistan resolved all known cases of statelessness in September 2024, making it the latest country to achieve this milestone. In November 2024, Thailand adopted a pathway to nationality for nearly half a million stateless people, with the full support of UNHCR. She also noted that in the Philippines, new legislation has enabled 8,000 stateless individuals to obtain citizenship, thanks to close collaboration between UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund and national authorities. These successes, she stressed, underscore how political will and humanitarian action can lead to transformative change.

89. She extended a personal invitation to all delegates to visit Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, home to the largest refugee camp in the world. She emphasized the generosity of Bangladesh and its people, who continue to provide safety and support to nearly one million refugees from Myanmar. The Director closed with a strong appeal to the international community, emphasizing that these refugees are not just statistics but individuals with hopes and dreams. She urged all stakeholders to sustain their commitments, ensuring that Rohingya refugees and displaced persons across Asia receive the protection, opportunities, and support they need to build a dignified future.

90. The representative of the **European Union, speaking on behalf of its member States**, expressed deep concern over the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Afghanistan, emphasizing the devastating impact on women and girls. The European Union and its member States remained committed to addressing the crisis through humanitarian funding to UNHCR, particularly to support refugees and displaced persons in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. She strongly condemned the systematic oppression of women, girls, and marginalized communities by the Taliban, calling for the full enjoyment of their human rights, their empowerment, participation, and leadership in all spheres of society, and their protection from all forms of violence, in line with international human rights obligations.

91. In supporting the humanitarian response of UNHCR, she commended efforts to provide protection, legal documentation, and life-saving assistance to Afghan returnees while also strengthening resilience-building efforts to promote long-term stability. The European Union and its member States urged UNHCR to continue advocating for an inclusive humanitarian response, ensuring that all displaced persons, including women and vulnerable groups, receive adequate protection and assistance. Stressing the importance of a comprehensive regional response, she reiterated the European Union's commitment to the

Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and the Team Europe regional initiative, which seek to foster coordinated efforts for durable solutions. Given the rapidly evolving situation in Afghanistan, the European Union and its member States called for continuous assessments to ensure that humanitarian efforts remain responsive and effective. Highlighting the principle of non-refoulement, the representative urged UNHCR to continue advocating against the deportation of undocumented Afghans from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, stressing the urgent need for safety and legal pathways for Afghan refugees.

92. Turning to the situation in Myanmar, she urged all parties to respect international humanitarian law, particularly in protecting civilians. Additionally, the European Union and its member States called on the military authorities to halt hostilities, cease the indiscriminate use of force, and ensure rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. Expressing full support for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' and the United Nations' efforts, she reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to a peaceful resolution in Myanmar in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669. She encouraged UNHCR to continue engaging with host countries, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and other regional actors to promote cross-border assistance and regional protection mechanisms.

93. Addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, she recognized the efforts of the Bangladeshi government despite increased insecurity in the camps and uncertainties in funding. She stressed the need for enhanced protection measures in refugee camps, calling for stronger safeguards and security mechanisms, effective monitoring systems, and reinforced cooperation with national authorities to uphold the civilian nature of the camps and ensure accountability for criminal acts. The European Union and its member States reaffirmed support for the Joint Response Plan, emphasizing the need to assist Rohingya refugees in achieving self-sufficiency through education, skills development, and sustainable livelihoods.

94. The representative supported the UNHCR call for preventive measures, particularly emphasizing the urgent need to conduct search and rescue operations for refugees and migrants at sea and to develop regional solutions for safe and dignified disembarkation. Commending the efforts undertaken by UNHCR to register all asylum seekers and refugees, she encouraged host countries, including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, to ensure access to basic services and promote self-reliance for displaced persons.

95. She expressed strong concerns over reports of deportations, particularly the forcible return of approximately 40 Uyghurs. The European Union and its member States reaffirmed unwavering commitment to the principle of non-refoulement and also reiterated the European Union's broader commitment to upholding international refugee and human rights law, ensuring that all persons in need of protection receive the necessary assistance, security, and dignity they deserve.

The meeting rose at 6:00 p.m.
