

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

Distr.: Restricted
8 May 2025

English only

Standing Committee

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

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

Summary record*, Wednesday, 12 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.

3. Regional activities and global programmes (resumed)

(a) Regional updates (resumed)

(iv) Asia and the Pacific (resumed)

1. The representative of **Pakistan** said there were approximately 3.5 million Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, 1.1 million of whom were undocumented. He noted that since the Taliban takeover in 2021, more than 700,000 undocumented Afghan nationals had entered Pakistan, posing significant national security and socio-economic challenges. In addition, while 120,000 Afghans were part of third-country resettlement programmes, only 82,000 of them had been successfully relocated due to slow process.

2. He announced that Pakistan was providing targeted assistance to Afghans in essential sectors, such as health, education, livelihood and agriculture. In 2024, Pakistan launched 4,500 fully funded scholarships for Afghan students under the Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships programme for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies, including one-third of that number reserved for female Afghan students. He informed that Pakistan had also made available special medical tourist visas to Afghan nationals, to allow them to travel to Pakistan for medical treatment.

3. He acknowledged the role of the Core Group for the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and emphasized the importance of following up on pledges made at the Global Refugee Forums in 2019 and 2023, urging countries that were committed to Afghan resettlement to honour their obligations. Pointing out that conflict had subsided in Afghanistan, he suggested that the international community seize the opportunity to support sustainable conditions for the return of Afghan nationals.

4. The representative of **New Zealand** emphasized that UNHCR was uniquely placed to carry out the invaluable work of providing crucial humanitarian assistance, protection and durable solutions for displaced persons worldwide, including for the 15.9 million refugees and other forcibly displaced and stateless people in the Asia and the Pacific region. She explained that UNHCR needed flexible and predictable funding to carry out its work effectively, efficiently and without interruption, and said that the multi-year and unearmarked funding from New Zealand to UNHCR was designed to help meet that need. She noted that New Zealand would continue to provide NZD18 million in multi-year, unearmarked core funding to support annual programmes of UNHCR for 2025, 2026 and 2027. She reaffirmed the commitment of New Zealand to resettlement of refugees and stated that the country's long-standing Refugee Quota Programme and complementary pathways as well as its efforts to help refugees settle successfully demonstrated that commitment.

5. The representative of **Australia** expressed deep concern over the protracted crises in Afghanistan and Myanmar and the substantial funding gap in the 2025 budget for the Asia and the Pacific region. She observed that funding to the region continued to drop despite increasing displacement and called on donors to consider making contributions to responses in the region. She said that Australia was continuing to support UNHCR to respond to the Afghanistan and Myanmar situations. At the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, Australia committed AUD235 million in humanitarian assistance to meet the needs of Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh as well as for humanitarian assistance in Myanmar and had exceeded that commitment by AUD20 million. Furthermore, since its pledge of AUD20 million to the Afghanistan situation at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, it had contributed an additional AUD50 million to support the needs of displaced Afghans and their host communities, including through the Regional Refugee Response Plan.

6. She stated that Australia was also supporting the region through its annual humanitarian resettlement programme. In the 2023 to 2024 programme year, Australia had offered 20,000 permanent resettlement places and protection to those most in need, representing the country's largest intake in a decade, and was offering up to 20,000 places again in the 2024-25 programme year. She commended UNHCR for its continued efforts to

support resettlement in the Asia and the Pacific region, including 42,100 referrals in 2024, resulting in 18,300 refugees from the Asia and the Pacific region departing to resettlement countries.

7. The representative of **Switzerland** stressed the importance of the Core Group for the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and informed that Switzerland would become more involved in the platform. Although he acknowledged that UNHCR was working to resolve the limits outlined in the report in terms of poor economic integration and reduced opportunities for return, he asked whether UNHCR could explain the regional differences and provide information on what factors would help to achieve progress for socio-economic integration in the region. He further asked how UNHCR could contribute to ensuring that financial transfers from outside remittances from migrants and refugees would be used for sustainable solutions especially returns.

8. The representative of **Brazil** welcomed the recent efforts made by UNHCR to protect the growing number of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons in the region. He said that the Brazilian Government was concerned about the situation in Afghanistan, where women and girls had faced increased risks and demanded special protection in the context of repeated violations of their rights. He noted that since 2021, Brazil has recognized the serious and widespread violations of human rights in Afghanistan, allowing its nationals to benefit from facilitated procedures to enter Brazil. Around 10,000 visas had been issued to those groups, positioning Brazil as one of the few countries openly welcoming Afghan nationals. The policy had also been adjusted to improve conditions for local integration, allowing for community sponsorship with the support of UNHCR.

9. The representative of **the Republic of Korea** emphasized the invaluable contributions of three of the largest host countries in the region, namely Bangladesh, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. She noted that the Republic of Korea was a responsible donor in the region and a member of the Core Group for the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and would, accordingly, continue to contribute in response to regional issues. Over the last three years, the Republic of Korea had provided \$94 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghans and to their host countries. In 2024, the Republic of Korea provided \$23 million, a fourfold increase from the previous year, to support Myanmar citizens and Rohingya refugees. Mindful of the importance of supporting host countries, programmes have included development cooperation projects towards refugees and host communities in Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. During the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023, the Government of the Republic of Korea pledged to enhance the self-reliance of refugees and to reduce their humanitarian needs through the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, focusing on addressing the root causes of the refugee crisis in the region. She further underlined the need for humanitarian access and assistance to vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls, and the important role of development actors in the implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

10. The representative of **Japan** reaffirmed his country's commitment to collaborating with UNHCR to improve humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan and Myanmar. In February and March 2025, Japan contributed approximately \$11 million to Bangladesh to support displaced people from Myanmar and provide them with water, sanitation and hygiene, health, shelter and waste management services. Of the amount contributed, about \$1.8 million would be directed towards UNHCR. Additionally, Japan would contribute approximately \$12 million to support returnees, refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities in Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan in cooperation with several United Nations agencies, with \$10 million directed towards UNHCR operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

11. The representative of **Bulgaria** said her country aligned itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and its member States. She noted the complex and deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and welcomed the work of UNHCR on enabling conditions for the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in safety and dignity, as well as for their reintegration. She expressed support for advocacy by UNHCR for uninterrupted and non-discriminatory delivery of humanitarian assistance and condemned the continued disrespect of women and children's rights to participate in humanitarian action by de facto authorities.

12. Noting that inadequate resources were hindering returns, she reiterated the commitment of Bulgaria to support activities of UNHCR under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework with respect to Afghanistan. She commended the envisaged mobilization of support by UNHCR to include Afghan refugees in national education systems and public health services of neighbouring countries like Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. She said that Bulgaria would continue to contribute financially to UNHCR under the Team Europe Initiative on Afghan Displacement Situation in support of efforts by the Iranian Government to provide enhanced health care and education for Afghan refugees, especially refugee children.

13. The representative of **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** expressed deep concern for the worsening situation in Myanmar, which was creating a serious challenge to safe and dignified return. Reiterating the commitment of the United Kingdom to Rohingya refugees and their host communities, he said that his country would continue to work with others to resolve the underlying causes of the crisis. He recalled that the Rohingya had faced decades of persecution and were the largest stateless population in the world, with an estimated 3.5 million internally displaced persons and around 1 million refugees hosted in Bangladesh, who remained vulnerable and heavily reliant on dwindling aid. For this reason, the United Kingdom was a leading donor to the Rohingya response and had provided £405 million since 2017.

14. The representative of **Norway** commended UNHCR for its emergency response to Afghan returnees from Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan and recognized both countries for their solidarity in hosting millions of Afghan refugees for decades. On the other hand, he highlighted that the new large-scale returns of Afghans from Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan in 2025, after the significant influx of returnees in 2023 and 2024, would aggravate the economic and security situation in Afghanistan, particularly in light of limited financial resources for the humanitarian response.

15. He appreciated the leading role of UNHCR in various durable solutions working groups and in sharpening its return and reintegration approaches, enabling increased attention to the protection, basic services and livelihoods of displaced populations. Emphasizing the need for UNHCR and its partners to continue prioritizing the empowerment of women and girls, he said that Norway would continue supporting the humanitarian response in Afghanistan as well as efforts to safeguard human rights.

16. The representative of **Bangladesh** said his country aligned itself with the statement of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. He noted that around 660 people had either died or were lost in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal in 2024 alone and called for coordinated efforts to prevent perilous maritime journeys. He expressed deep concern over the evolving turmoil across Myanmar, particularly in the Rakhine State. He asked UNHCR to meaningfully engage with Myanmar to create a conducive environment in the Rakhine State to facilitate early repatriation of the Rohingya from Bangladesh. He noted that while Bangladesh continued to host over 1.3 million Rohingya, the renewed conflict in northern areas of the Rakhine State had caused more than 80,000 to enter the country in the last six months, who had been provided humanitarian assistance after the completion of biometric identification.

17. He underlined that although Bangladesh had limited resources and land constraints, it was collaborating with UNHCR and other United Nations agencies to make the temporary stay of Rohingya refugees safe and secure. The Government of Bangladesh had also deployed thousands of public officials and security forces to operate 33 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. In the Bhasan Char camp, more than 36,000 Rohingya had been relocated with the support of UNHCR. He stated that the prolonged stay of large Rohingya populations in congested areas was having a negative impact on the surrounding environment and biodiversity as well as causing serious social imbalance as the Rohingya population had already outnumbered the host community in Cox's Bazar. Around 6,800 acres of forest reserves had been degraded to make way for refugee settlements, including a daily cutting down of trees for firewood by the Rohingya. He expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state with 3.5 million people internally displaced as of January 2025. He stated that more impactful and visible measures needed to be taken in Rakhine state to build trust and confidence of the Rohingya and called on UNHCR to meaningfully engage with Myanmar to create conducive

conditions in Rakhine state to facilitate early repatriation of Rohingyas from Bangladesh. Recalling that it had been eight years since the first displacement of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh in 2017, he announced that not a single Rohingya was able to return to their homeland since. He acknowledged the high level conference organized by the United Nations which would take place in September 2025 aiming to explore lasting solutions to the protracted crisis. He called on the United Nations to effectively collaborate and for UNHCR to play a key role in this regard.

18. While he commended the support of the international community for the Rohingya situation, he noted that funds for the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis were consistently falling short of funding targets each year even as the targeted Rohingya population to be covered under the plan steadily increased. In 2024, only 64 per cent of the estimated fund for the Joint Response Plan was secured, placing an additional burden on the host country. In addition, he expressed deep concern about the World Food Programme's decision to reduce food rations for Rohingya refugees from \$12.5 to \$6 per person per month, which would take effect from April 2025. The reduction would not only affect the living standards of refugees but would ultimately jeopardize regional security as without hope the distressed people would try to engage in negative coping mechanisms. He called on the international community to join the upcoming launch of the joint response plan and make a resolution for the protracted crisis on the basis of the principle of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

19. The representative of **Germany** said his country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union on behalf of its member States. He stressed that Germany continued to closely monitor the humanitarian situation concerning refugees and migrants in Afghanistan, particularly with the large numbers of Afghan citizens facing relocation from Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. He also expressed concern about the persisting Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh and Myanmar and appreciated the coordination of UNHCR with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the Rohingya refugee camps and the organization's tireless efforts in supporting Afghan returnees from Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. Reaffirming the role of Germany as a key partner and noting the negative impacts of budget cuts on vulnerable populations, he called on all partners to redouble efforts in addressing regional displacement crises, taking into account a sustainable responses approach.

20. 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. She reiterated that his Government remained committed to supporting displaced Afghan refugees and, as chair of the Core Group for the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, aimed to share in the global responsibility regarding the Afghan people in Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan. Acknowledging the hospitality of Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan towards Afghan refugees, she expressed concern about reports of planned deportations of Afghan refugees from both countries and underscored that people in need of international protection should not be deported and repatriation plans had to be in line with international standards of voluntary, dignified and safe returns. She noted that mixed movements in the region called for close coordination and cooperation between UNHCR and IOM. She commended both organizations for working together in a complementary way and called for both organizations to improve data collection in order to design more targeted interventions.

21. She expressed concern about the Rohingya situation in view of worsening tensions in the Rakhine State which continued to pose serious challenges to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of all displaced persons. She thanked Bangladesh for continuing to host over 1 million Rohingya and announced that the Netherlands (Kingdom of the) had allocated €1 million to support the UNHCR response to the Rohingya situation.

22. The representative of **Iran (Islamic Republic of)** said his country remained steadfast in its commitment to assist the millions of Afghan refugees it was hosting by consistently providing access to education, healthcare and essential services. Free primary healthcare services were available through 30,000 healthcare centres, and all Afghan children had access to public schooling, with over 700,000 enrolled. However, he noted that the significant influx of refugees had placed pressure on the education system, reducing opportunities for Iranian

students and compelling many families in the country to seek costly private education for their children.

23. He pointed out that while Iran (Islamic Republic of) remained committed to its humanitarian obligations, it was important to distinguish between registered refugees and individuals who had not sought asylum through legal channels and stressed that the principle of non-refoulement applied to those seeking asylum and was not extended to individuals who were unlawfully present in the country without making an asylum claim. He said that despite claims of humanitarian exceptions, unilateral sanctions on Iran (Islamic Republic of) had severely restricted access to financial resources. Consequently, Iran (Islamic Republic of) expected UNHCR to take an active role in engaging relevant stakeholders to address the challenges and facilitate practical solutions. Noting that the resilience of host communities had reached its limits and public concerns over prolonged refugee presence were growing, he called on the international community to prioritize efforts to create conditions for the safe and dignified return of Afghan refugees to their homeland.

24. The representative of **Thailand** said it was essential to develop and strengthen national mechanisms in the provision of effective protection. In this regard, Thailand had launched a national screening mechanism, operational since 2023, to screen various groups of individuals in need of protection and to systematically grant 'Protected Person Status' to forcibly displaced persons. In 2024, it withdrew its reservation to Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provided alternatives to detention for displaced children and their parents in accordance with applicable international or domestic laws and procedures.

25. On statelessness, she announced that the Thai Government had adopted a Cabinet Resolution to expedite nationality acquisition for almost half a million stateless persons, particularly stateless children born in Thailand, and had joined the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. As a host and transit country, she said that Thailand was particularly concerned about funding cuts from traditional donors and the potential suspension of resettlement. She called on the international community to come together to find solutions and provide adequate and timely support to host communities. She recalled that Thailand had been host to a large number of displaced persons from Myanmar for more than 30 years and had also been providing humanitarian assistance and shelter to new groups of persons fleeing the conflict in Myanmar. She informed that Thailand was planning to provide assistance and protection to vulnerable populations along the Thai-Myanmar border by enhancing access to health services and education.

26. The representative of **Canada** emphasized the intensifying crisis in Myanmar, which was affecting the Rohingya population and compelling them to undertake dangerous maritime journeys and welcomed the UNHCR Global Initiative on Protection at Sea. Regarding Afghan refugees, he said that there were concerns about the risks faced by returnees, many of whom were women, children and teenagers. He stressed that Canada was in favour of improving access to protection, including alternatives to detention, building asylum capacity and the ability to respond to prolonged situations, and encouraged UNHCR to strengthen its commitment to work with governments to improve relevant legal frameworks and ensure access to fair and effective procedures.

27. The representative of **Türkiye** said that diminishing funding for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan was exacerbating already dire conditions and announced that his country had contributed an additional \$500,000 to the United Nations Afghan Trust Fund for Afghanistan to support the urgent needs of the repatriated Afghan migrants. Similarly, the Turkish development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan was one of the most comprehensive and sustainable development programmes the country had implemented for a single country. He noted that Türkiye was continuing to support education in Afghanistan through the Turkish Maarif Foundation, a Turkish non-profit public education organization with 46 schools across Afghanistan, providing education to nearly 6,000 Afghan students. Afghanistan was also the leading beneficiary of its scholarship programme, with more than 1,100 Afghan students studying in Türkiye, including some 200 women.

28. The **Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (UNHCR)** thanked host countries, including those participating in the third-country resettlement programme and

those providing complimentary pathways, and donors, who were providing earmarked and unearmarked funding to support operations in the region. She emphasized that UNHCR was reimagining its presence in countries such as Afghanistan and agreed that engagement with development actors and international financial institutions from the beginning of a crisis was essential to sustaining returns, which underscored the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and the sustainable responses approach. The organization was also strengthening its partnership with IOM, and in Afghanistan and Myanmar, it was focusing on partnering with national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support its mandate.

29. She noted that although the environment for returns to countries of origin such as Afghanistan and Myanmar was not yet conducive. UNHCR was, nonetheless, collaborating with partners and stakeholders in the Rakhine state on scaling up support. She stated that the absorption capacity for large-scale returns to Afghanistan was not there yet, and that UNHCR was focusing on careful planning of repatriation to prevent pendular movements and to ensure sustainability of returns.

30. The representative of the **Asia Durable Solutions Platform speaking on behalf of NGOs** said that it was important for States to engage with Afghan authorities, including through the Support Platform for the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, to provide support to the over 22 million people in need of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, even amid news of additional restrictions imposed by authorities. Noting that durable solutions for Afghan refugees remained critical, including through long-term planning, sustained investments and third-country solutions, he called for effective nexus approaches and lifting restrictions on programming for resilience, urban planning and capacity building. He commended Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan for hosting millions of Afghans and called on them to maintain their longstanding support. Pointing to the non-return advisory of UNHCR, he raised concerns over the increasing emphasis on returns and the lack of reintegration prospects for most Afghans and reminded States of their obligations of non-refoulement and called on them to halt compulsory returns and encourage access to legal status for Afghans.

31. He recalled that in Myanmar, the escalating conflict had led to significant increases in casualties, severe restrictions on humanitarian operations, a worsening food insecurity and health crisis and displacement within the country and across its borders, exacerbated by a conscription law particularly affecting the youth. In Bangladesh, the interim Government appointed after the summer upheavals had committed to continued support to refugees and called for increased responsibility sharing. However, the Rohingya still faced insecurity in camps, compounded by mobility restrictions and limited access to education and livelihoods. Therefore, many Rohingya had continued to embark on perilous migration pathways in their search for safety and solutions.

32. Noting that continued pushback policies and regional coordination deficiencies had resulted in the Andaman Sea route becoming one of the deadliest worldwide, he said non-government organizations expected that the high-level conference on Myanmar would result in concrete commitments for coordinated regional action that expanded protection and solutions, particularly by securing commitments from regional governments to respect non-refoulement, in line with the UNHCR Guidance Note on International Protection; adopting regional standard operational procedures on search and rescue, disembarkation and civil society engagement in coordination structures; ensuring that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations included forced displacement in its Vision 2045 plan, while recognizing the limits of the Five-Point Consensus approach; and improving longer-term hosting arrangements through increased access to legal status and essential services, including mental health and psychosocial support.

33. On durable solutions, he said that policy changes by the United States of America on humanitarian funding and third-country solutions were already impacting those whose resettlement processes had been halted and asked the administration of the United States of America to reverse its course. He further called on other donors to cover existing gaps in funding and solutions to avoid a drop in hosting resources and third-country solutions. He underlined that achieving the four objectives of the Global Refugee Compact required the fulfilment of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum and reminded all stakeholders that

pledges could be made on an ongoing basis. He said NGOs looked forward to engaging with UNHCR in the 2025 NGO regional consultations on access to asylum and international protection and expected that more information would be shared at the regional level.

(vi) *Europe*

34. **The Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe (UNHCR)** noted that UNHCR had reached 4 million people inside Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict, striving for impact and efficiency as part of the broader inter-agency response to the crisis. He said that the organization's operational presence had been reoriented as close as possible to the frontline, prioritizing local partnerships and procurement and designing all efforts to strengthen national systems and services for the broader recovery in Ukraine. As European States continued to 'step up' to protect and include Ukrainian refugees across the continent, UNHCR was responding by scaling back its operational presence and budgetary requirements. At the same time, the organization continued to bolster its operational readiness to support large-scale voluntary refugee returns should the security situation inside Ukraine positively evolve. He further noted that across Europe in 2024, UNHCR had reached 1.6 million people with services and support while continuing to critically review operational and administrative costs to direct maximum resources to support those it worked with and for.

35. He pointed out that recently concluded evaluations had attested to the quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian response of UNHCR inside Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, mirroring the positive conclusions of audits. He agreed that reduced funding was hampering the emergency response in Ukraine and across the region. In the Republic of Moldova, for instance, where 80 per cent of refugees were women and children, UNHCR was reducing cash assistance to the most vulnerable by 25 per cent as of April 2025 because the organization could not afford to maintain the vital assistance. He thanked Member States that had stepped up to support UNHCR in Europe and beyond with early and unearmarked contributions, including Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Spain and Sweden, as well as those who had increased their support in 2025, such as Croatia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Lithuania.

36. With respect to the Syrian Arab Republic, he explained that UNHCR was using its existing systems and networks to strengthen its support to Syrian refugees across Europe, who were faced with difficult decisions about returning home. Through community outreach and two-way communication, UNHCR was providing accurate and timely information, offering practical guidance and empowering Syrian refugees to make informed choices. The results of the intentions surveys targeting Syrian refugees across Europe were expected to further hone the organization's efforts. Meanwhile, UNHCR continued to emphasize the important role of 'go-and-see' visits in the decisions of refugees to voluntarily return and called on States across the region to support such visits, including with clear guidance on how refugees could undertake those visits without jeopardising their legal status. He commended Türkiye which continued to provide vital protection to Syrian nationals, while permitting short-term visits to Syria in support of informed return decisions.

37. On irregular and mixed population movements, he said that UNHCR was pursuing its support to Member States and the European Commission in preparing for the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which offered a concrete opportunity to ensure access to asylum for those in need while strengthening the management of mixed movements and the return of rejected asylum-seekers.

38. He underlined the importance of working with United Nations partners, notably IOM, to leverage the skills of people on the move to benefit economies facing labour shortages while providing alternatives to dangerous journeys. These efforts, complemented by those seeking to include asylum-seekers and refugees where they were, as indicated in the route-based approach, had the potential to improve the management of mixed movements. He said that as the European Union looked to the revision of its return framework, UNHCR was emphasizing the importance of the prompt return of individuals found to not need international protection in preserving the credibility of asylum systems. However, he insisted that voluntary returns, complemented by reintegration assistance, should continue to be the preferred approach and as echoed by joint advocacy messages on child protection

considerations issued by IOM, the United Nations Children's Fund, and UNHCR, alternatives to pre-removal detention should be prioritized and vulnerable groups, particularly children, should never be detained.

39. With regard to the region's efforts to prevent and reduce statelessness, he noted that the ratification of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness by the Slovenian Parliament was a significant step towards reducing statelessness. Furthermore, the growing momentum behind the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, evidenced by the commitments from many States in Europe, alongside the crucial support of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and civil society organizations, was a testament to the collective will to end statelessness in Europe.

40. The representative of **Poland, speaking on behalf of European like-minded States**, namely Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Malta, Montenegro, Monaco, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, called for compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and accountability for its violations, to ensure the protection of civilians and facilitation of unhindered humanitarian access. He said that the group would continue stepping up action to uphold international law, including international refugee law and human rights in relation to refugees, internally displaced persons and, in particular, the fundamental right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees, with particular attention to persons in marginalized or vulnerable situations. He further called on all States to prevent and combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling and reaffirmed the group's commitment to countering the instrumentalization of asylum-seekers and migrants for political purposes in full respect of human rights and international law.

41. He expressed the group's condemnation of the brutal, unprovoked, unjustified and illegal full-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which had forced millions of people from Ukraine to flee their homes and severely hampered access to essential services for those who remained, and said it constituted an unacceptable violation of the United Nations Charter. He reaffirmed the group's unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and its inherent right of self-defence and welcomed the adoption of the 2025 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and the Regional Refugee Response Plan. He thanked UNHCR for its vital work in delivering protection, shelter, multi-purpose cash and winterization assistance, including in frontline areas and called on the organization to continue addressing the most pressing needs of Ukrainian refugees and their hosts while working towards inclusion in national social security systems.

42. He further called on UNHCR to continue providing adequate support in the region, particularly to individuals in marginalized or vulnerable situations. He cited the situation of the Republic of Moldova, which had experienced an energy crisis, and announced that the group would support the Republic of Moldova to enhance its resilience and stability and strengthen its energy security. In Armenia, significant progress had been made towards the integration of Karabakh Armenians, even though the transition from emergency support to sustainable solutions remained complex. He encouraged UNHCR to implement the humanitarian-, development-peace nexus approach of Armenia to strengthen protection systems, enhance legal support and address mental health challenges while advancing the 'One Refugee Approach'.

43. The representative of **Germany** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. He reiterated the support of Germany for Ukraine and said that Germany would continue to carry its share of the humanitarian support burden for the people in Ukraine, for Ukrainian refugees, as well as the host communities in neighbouring countries. He emphasized the need to re-examine the most urgent needs and funding gaps through a coordinated inter-agency approach so that donors could respond coherently. He highlighted that since February 2022, Germany had been trying to support that approach through its contributions of approximately €250 million for

humanitarian assistance under the UNHCR Ukraine response plan since February 2022. He said that Germany had prioritized funding for projects with a focus on internally displaced persons, such as its contribution of €7 million for Ukraine's Prykhystok programme, implemented in cooperation with UNHCR, to enable families hosting internally displaced persons to access grants that would subsidize their generous hospitality.

44. The representative of **Spain** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. She said that as a destination of migratory routes, Spain took its responsibility in strengthening its response to international protection seriously and valued the human-centred approach of UNHCR. She noted that as the war of aggression against Ukraine had entered its fourth year, Spain had given temporary protection to 230,000 people, 32 per cent of whom were minors, placing it as the fourth largest country in the European Union to implement such a programme. In addition, the country's asylum and refugee office had processed 96,000 international protection applications in 2024, a 42 per cent increase over the previous year. Refugee subsidiary protection status was similarly awarded in 18.5 per cent of cases, a six per cent increase over 2023. She recalled that the European Union's Pact on Migration and Asylum was an opportunity to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Europe with a joint, efficient and humane solution. However, it was important to ensure its proper implementation, placing a priority on human rights and supporting the most vulnerable.

45. She announced that Spain had allocated at least 10 per cent of its humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced persons, with priority for Latin America, the Sahel, Afghanistan and the Middle East. It was also promoting access to education and digital connectivity for refugees and had scaled up efforts to prevent gender-based violence to protect children and provide psychosocial support in line with the UNHCR plans for 2025. She reiterated that Spain would chair the consultations on resettlement and complementary pathways to find and facilitate solutions and respond to global displacement challenges.

46. The representative of **Sweden** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States and condemned war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. He reaffirmed the solidarity of Sweden with Ukraine and its neighbouring countries and its commitment to support the reconstruction, resilience, and humanitarian needs of Ukraine. He welcomed the launch of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan for Ukraine for 2025 and recognized the efforts of UNHCR to support the Government-led inter-agency response, working with national and local actors to reach the most vulnerable in hard-to-reach areas, including the front line.

47. The representative of **Estonia** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. She underlined that the loss of lives on the Mediterranean and other sea routes was heartbreaking. She conveyed her country's condemnation of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, noting that the Russian Federation had occupied one-fifth of Ukraine's territory. She expressed concern about the forced deportation of Ukrainian children, with nearly 20,000 children taken to the Russian Federation, and called for those children to be returned to Ukraine. She highlighted that Estonia was hosting over 40,000 Ukrainian refugees, around three per cent of the country's population, and since 2023, had provided more than €27.2 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine, including through UNHCR.

48. She underlined the need to recognize the volatile and fragile situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as large numbers of Syrian refugees were hosted in Europe. Acknowledging the importance of addressing the root causes of displacement, including climate change and conflict, she welcomed the work of UNHCR in finding sustainable solutions for the most vulnerable and encouraged it to focus on its core mandate in light of funding cuts.

49. The representative of **Bulgaria** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. He reiterated his country's firm condemnation of the war of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation and said the Russian Federation had to be held fully accountable for its war crimes and for the massive damage inflicted upon Ukraine. He commended the efforts of UNHCR to support the Government-led inter-agency winter response and to help Ukrainians who wished to

return and rebuild their homes once the skies were cleared of missiles and drones. He welcomed further efforts aimed at preventing gender-based violence and implementing survivor-centred responses and expressed support for the organization's capacity-building initiatives for national authorities and local actors, including women-led organizations.

50. He reiterated the solidarity of Bulgaria with Ukraine, noting that his country had provided temporary protection in Bulgaria to more than 200,000 Ukrainians, with about 80,000 deciding to remain in the country. He also reaffirmed the commitment of Bulgaria to provide assistance to UNHCR for its activities in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and welcomed the Refugee Response Plan for 2025-2026. He further reiterated Bulgaria's solidarity with the suffering of people and nations in other parts of the world and said his country continued to grant asylum to persons in need of international protection.

51. The representative of **Croatia** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States and condemned the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine as well as its systematic attacks against civilian and energy infrastructure. He said that Croatia remained unwavering in providing emergency humanitarian and development support to Ukraine, which amounted to nearly €73 million since 2022. The support of Croatia also included financial support for more than 29,000 forcibly displaced Ukrainian citizens, mostly families with children, who had found a safe haven in Croatia and had access to a wide range of social services with a total value of €36.5 million.

52. He highlighted the support of Croatia to the Ukrainian energy sector, with Croatia providing €5 million to help rebuild and reinforce energy infrastructure. For instance, in January 2025, Croatia signed a €2 million agreement with UNHCR to directly support the Ukrainian Government's priorities for recovery and resilience building in the energy sector. In addition, due to the unique experience of post-war transition and recovery in Croatia, it had placed additional focus on its assistance to Ukraine in the field of humanitarian demining, with financial support exceeding €10 million, to create a conducive environment for safe returns, unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid and sustainable recovery and reconstruction. To support the process, in October 2023, Croatia hosted an international donor conference on humanitarian demining in Zagreb in Ukraine, where States and international organizations pledged more than €473 million for demining Ukraine.

53. The representative of **Brazil** noted that since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, Brazil had emphasized the need for dialogue and a negotiated solution based on the principles of the United Nations Charter. He recognized the unprecedented flow of refugees the conflict had created and welcomed the assessment of UNHCR, which had demonstrated that a significant increase in the number of voluntary returns was likely should a ceasefire agreement materialize.

54. The representative of **Malta** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. She explained that as a frontline State for migration flows, Malta understood the complex challenges of the continuous arrival of mixed flows of migrants and asylum-seekers towards Europe first-hand. She noted that Maltese authorities had, nonetheless, remained fully committed to respecting their obligations under international law and the human rights of all people in the territory under their jurisdiction. She welcomed the support of UNHCR for the whole-of-route approach to address root causes and ensure protection needs were met along all the routes taken by asylum-seekers. She said that the Pact on Migration and Asylum had provided the opportunity to enhance the capacity of the European Union and its member States to further improve migration management and the common asylum systems across the Union and said that Malta would continue to seek effective solidarity with frontline member States to ensure that protection was provided to those who truly needed it.

55. With respect to the Syrian Arab Republic, she emphasized that ensuring that returns took place under generally safe and sustainable conditions remained paramount, even though violent escalations had highlighted the persistent fragility of the situation and had underscored the need for continuous monitoring. She acknowledged the importance of international coordination in addressing refugee concerns and welcomed the role of UNHCR in ensuring that any return related activities adhered to its operational framework. On the

invasion of Ukraine, she underlined the importance of working together on both short- and long-term solutions and said that the activation and renewal of the temporary protection directive had shown the willingness of the European Union and its member States to effectively address challenges.

56. The representative of **the Russian Federation** drew attention to the contribution of the Russian Federation to strengthening the international regime to protect refugees and asylum-seekers, as evidenced by its large-scale humanitarian activities in many countries and regions, as well as its political efforts to prevent and resolve crises. He said that the Russian Federation attached great importance to developing cooperation with UNHCR and appreciated the organization's effective work, especially in major humanitarian crises which resulted in large, mixed migration flows and urged the organization to act in line with international humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, impartiality and humanity in full compliance of its mandate which was founded on the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

57. He commended the leading role played by UNHCR in successfully implementing the Global Compact on Refugees and said that the Russian Federation would actively participate in the second High-level Officials Meeting in 2025 to review the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. He acknowledged the attention of UNHCR to resolving the problems of persons under its competence in Armenia and Azerbaijan and reiterated that there was mass statelessness in a number of European countries, the reduction of which should remain a priority on the UNHCR agenda.

58. He announced that the Russian Federation had granted refugee status to over 10,000 people from 73 States, with continued improvements to Russian legislation on providing refuge. Also, the country had a new bill of law on providing refuge in the territory of the Russian Federation, which enshrined the convention-based principles of protection, including confidentiality of information and non-refoulement and combined procedures for granting refugee status with the provision of temporary refuge. It had similarly introduced a new arrangement on temporary protection, which satisfied the migration policy objective of the Russian Federation of upholding high standards and developing mechanisms to assist foreign citizens seeking protection in the country. Noting that the number of stateless persons in the Russian Federation was decreasing every year, he underlined that the Russian Federation was promoting the acquisition of Russian citizenship by stateless persons who were permanently residing in the country. From 1992 to 2025, Russian citizenship had been acquired by some 800,000 stateless persons, and in 2023, the new federal law 'On the Citizenship of the Russian Federation' entered into force, simplifying the process for acquisition of Russian citizenship by stateless persons with a special provision for the prevention of statelessness among children.

59. The representative of **Uganda** acknowledged the important role many European States were playing in Africa to provide protection for vulnerable populations. She called on European States to address the root causes of mixed movements and further urged donors to fund and support hosting countries or countries of origin of those migrants to end risky movements, including human trafficking. Pointing to the Pact on Migration and Asylum, she recalled that there was a need to respect the human rights of asylum-seekers arriving in Europe and urged UNHCR to continue advocating for transparent, fair and impartial asylum procedures.

60. Turning to the impact areas and how they were being responded to, she acknowledged that Europe continued to perform better than other regions in areas such as school enrolment and requested UNHCR to support refugees in lower-tier developing countries. On resettlement, she asked UNHCR to share disaggregated information on the origin of refugee resettlement places offered by European Union member States, including how many were being resettled from the African continent. She further requested UNHCR to provide clarification on the modalities of the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation, which was adopted in 2024.

61. On the financial situation, she asked UNHCR to share details of the exact responses that had been employed to ensure the transition from humanitarian assistance towards sustainable responses, as Uganda had implemented that approach over a long period and had

achieved limited success in terms of sustainability. She further requested for UNHCR to provide an update on the success of the Temporary Protection Directive of the European Union as of March 2025, which served as an important step for refugees from Ukraine to be guaranteed continued protection and access to rights and services in host countries. She asked if the Directive was still in place, if there were expectations for its extension and whether it could be extended to other nationalities in the spirit of respect for human rights, especially for those in vulnerable situations like refugees fleeing from the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

62. The representative of **Romania** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. He reiterated the support by Romania for the activities and the mandate of UNHCR and its approaches to overcome the financial difficulties. He emphasized that Romania was doing its best to provide protection to Ukrainian refugees. Since February 2022, more than 11 million Ukrainian citizens had entered Romania, and 179,737 refugees had obtained temporary protection status in Romania as of 31 December 2024.

63. He highlighted that, in June 2024, Romania, as the first European Union country to develop a national plan of measures to address mid- and long-term needs of refugees from Ukraine, had adopted legislation on humanitarian support and assistance to all foreign citizens or stateless persons in special situations, that established a framework for the inclusion of refugees from Ukraine in the national social protection programmes and introduced time-limited conditional assistance for new arrivals. He noted that the successful implementation of the legislation had been possible because of effective collaboration between the Government, local authorities, the private sector, civil society, as well as international organizations and institutions, and because it granted temporary protection, access to vital services of healthcare, education and employment, the opportunity to participate in inter-cultural activities, and covered emergency shelter and other social benefits.

64. The representative of **Finland** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. Finland considered the full-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine a violation of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in the United Nations Charter and called for Russia and its leadership to be held accountable for violations of international law. With Ukraine being the largest recipient of humanitarian assistance from Finland as well as its biggest development cooperation partner country, she reaffirmed the support of Finland to the response to the Ukraine situation for as long as was needed, including through its partnership with UNHCR. She highlighted the support of Finland to Ukraine as well as the protection provided to more than 77,000 people fleeing Ukraine. Further, she pointed out that Finland had its own national plan for the reconstruction of Ukraine, involving collaboration between a broad range of actors, including the State administration, the private sector and other stakeholders. She commended the invaluable work of UNHCR in the Europe region, particularly relative to the Regional Refugee Response for the Ukraine Situation and emphasized the importance of the organization's focus on supporting Government-led responses and on strong partnerships with local community service organizations and other actors to support early recovery. She emphasized the need to take adequately into account the special needs of persons in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, and to involve organizations representing such groups in the planning and implementation of refugee responses.

65. The representative of **France** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. Drawing attention to the operations of UNHCR in Europe in 2025, which had been necessitated due to conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the war of aggression by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, she noted that in 2021, for instance, France only allocated three per cent of its contributions for UNHCR to Europe, but by 2023 that figure had risen to 19 per cent. Recalling that peace initiatives could not come at the cost of the capitulation of Ukraine, she reaffirmed that France would remain mobilized with Ukraine and support UNHCR and humanitarian actors in the field.

66. The representative of **Austria** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States, condemned the attacks by the Russian Federation on Ukraine, and called on its leadership to immediately cease its use of armed force against Ukraine and withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine. The representative further called on both parties to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances. She reaffirmed the solidarity of Austria with Ukraine and announced that the country had mobilized more than €294 million in State financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. Furthermore, since the outbreak of the war, it had received over 125,000 displaced persons from Ukraine registered in Austria under the European Union temporary protection directive. Austria also hosted more than 78,000 displaced Ukrainians and delivered public welfare services to nearly 37,000 of them.

67. The representative of **Italy** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States and condemned the full-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demanded accountability for international law violations, as well as for safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to provide urgent assistance to the civilian population. She reaffirmed the continued support of Italy for assistance and protection needs in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and announced that, as part of efforts to support the long-term recovery in Ukraine, Italy would host the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome in July 2025 to mobilize financial, technical, and diplomatic support to coordinate actions on infrastructure rebuilding and economic resilience.

68. She underlined that Italy remained the first country of destination for asylum-seekers and refugees arriving in Europe through the Central Mediterranean route, with 7,677 arrivals by sea as of 9 March 2025, marking a 40 per cent increase compared to 2024, and said that Italy ranked third in Europe for the total number of asylum-seekers. While reaffirming the commitment of Italy to international protection and to strengthened cooperation, she raised concerns about the rise in arrivals and announced that the country was scaling up and strengthening its initiatives, most of which were in partnership with UNHCR, to enhance the international response to humanitarian crises and find durable solutions. She reiterated her country's full support for the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum.

69. She further reaffirmed the commitment of Italy to economic inclusion and refugee integration, recognizing that safe and legal complementary pathways were crucial to protecting refugees and combating human trafficking. In 2025, and in partnership with UNHCR, Italy had continued to strengthen labour mobility, humanitarian corridors and education pathways. The country's Charter for the Integration of Refugees was similarly expanding to support refugee inclusion at the local level, as was its 'Common Space' project, which was providing refugees with language courses, employment support, and cultural orientation through UNHCR, local authorities and civil society. She said the efforts were in alignment with Italy's Global Refugee Forum pledges, reinforcing its commitment to self-reliance and long-term solutions.

70. The representative of the **Netherlands (Kingdom of the)** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. She welcomed the adoption of the 2025-2026 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan and reiterated her country's solidarity with Ukraine, emphasizing that the war of aggression by the Russian Federation had not only caused forced displacement but had also destroyed the opportunity for many Ukrainians to live their lives and to be able to return home. In addition, she underlined the importance of not only addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees but also laying the foundation for long-term recovery. She underlined that, where possible, reconstruction had to be enabled to help affected communities rebuild lives and regain stability.

71. The representative of **Switzerland** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. Pointing to the report on Europe, which demonstrated that it was better to coordinate response to forced displacement under the European Pact on Migration and Asylum, which would enter into a new phase in 2026, he agreed that initiatives with various countries on migration routes towards Europe contributed to better management of migration movements and

strengthening of international protection for those most in need. On Ukraine, he said that while military conflicts continued, returns were impossible, and there would be a continued need for support from UNHCR in the field. Regarding the Syrian Arab Republic, he asked UNHCR to provide a clear assessment of conditions for returns, including in partnership with other agencies such as IOM. He wished to know whether returns were safe, informed, voluntary and dignified and if school curricula in host schools were suitable for preparing for the re-inclusion of children after their return to either the Syrian Arab Republic or Ukraine.

72. The representative of **Ukraine** recalled that three years into the war with the Russian Federation, more than 11 million people remained displaced, including about 4.9 million within Ukraine and a further 6.9 million who had sought safety abroad. She noted that sustainable reintegration of about 4.2 million returnees likewise remained a long shot due to heavy residential damage and destruction, disruption of essential services, and worsening safety risks. She thanked UNHCR for the launch of the 2025-2026 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan and called on the donor community to provide the necessary funding to ensure its effective implementation. She welcomed the fact that some 1.7 million internally displaced persons and war-affected people were reached with assistance and protection from UNHCR in Ukraine in 2024 and further welcomed the decision of the European Union to extend until March 2026 the temporary protection for more than 4 million Ukrainians who had fled the war by the Russian Federation and expressed appreciation for the continued hospitality and solidarity shown in the European Union member States and other hosting countries towards displaced Ukrainians. She explained that, for its part, Ukraine had adopted a set of measures to advance safe and dignified returns of temporarily displaced Ukrainians from abroad, if security conditions allow, that was led by the newly established Ministry of National Unity headed by the Vice-Prime Minister of Ukraine.

73. She underlined that the situation of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, including children, who had been deported by the Russian Federation to its territory in violation of international humanitarian law, remained a serious concern. To date, only 1,227 children out of 19,546 deported to the Russian Federation had been returned and reunited with their families in Ukraine. She called on all mandated humanitarian organizations, including UNHCR, to get full and unimpeded access to those people, particularly children, and facilitate their safe return to Ukraine in accordance with the Convention relative to the protection of civilian persons in time of war (Fourth Geneva Convention). She condemned the forced imposition of Russian citizenship in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which involved deportations and regressive effects on the enjoyment of human rights and announced that unlawful decisions and actions of the Russian Federation would have no legal consequences for the citizens of Ukraine living under occupation.

74. The representative of **Denmark** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of a broad group of like-minded European States and condemned the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. She reaffirmed her country's support to Ukraine and applauded Ukraine for showing impressive courage and resilience despite humanitarian needs remaining alarmingly high and cited the 2025-2026 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and Regional Refugee Response Plan as a clear testimony to that. She welcomed the continued focus of UNHCR on supporting Government priorities within Ukraine, including the dual focus on immediate humanitarian response and, where conditions allowed, early recovery efforts. She asked UNHCR to provide additional information on how it was engaging and coordinating with development partners and the private sector in Ukraine. She commended the commitment of UNHCR to continue to work and build the capacity of local partners, including women-led organizations, to ensure social cohesion within host communities in Ukraine, as well as the organization's continued focus on addressing sexual and gender-based violence.

75. She also welcomed the commitment of UNHCR to the rights-based, comprehensive whole-of-route approaches to tackle complex mixed movements and noted that strengthening both asylum and migration management systems was essential to ensure that the protection needs of both refugees and migrants were met. Furthermore, she said that the Danish Government was working with partners to develop new joint approaches to address irregular

migration towards Europe as a complement to the Pact on Migration and Asylum and was counting on the continued engagement of UNHCR.

76. The representative of **the Republic of Moldova** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. He said that over 1.2 million Ukrainian citizens had entered the territory of the Republic of Moldova since the beginning of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, with over 120,000 still present in the country. He underlined that the Moldovan Government had been doing a tremendous amount of work to provide services and protection to refugees with the support from UNHCR and many other partners. Starting in March 2023, it launched the temporary protection mechanism for Ukrainian refugees, which had already benefitted over 70,000 Ukrainian citizens. These had also been extended until 1 March 2026.

77. He said that regardless of the country's best efforts, the burden on Moldovan authorities remained high. The recent energy crisis resulted in significant increases in prices for energy resources and compelled the Government to provide additional compensation to vulnerable groups. He expressed gratitude to the European Commission and the European Union member States who had stepped in with emergency support to help. Given that context, he expressed concern about the reduction in funds available to support refugees, explaining that the cuts would increase pressure on the host country. In that regard, he appealed to donors to continue providing support. He welcomed the sustainable responses approach that was helping both Ukrainian refugees and their hosting communities in the Republic of Moldova.

78. The representative of **Canada** welcomed the multifaceted approach of UNHCR to address both immediate protection needs and long-term solutions and similarly welcomed the commitment of European States to refugee inclusion, particularly through the expansion of resettlement and humanitarian admission places. He said that Canada supported the objective of Ukraine to end the Russian Federation's war and deterring future aggression and would continue to champion the human dimension of the peace formula of Ukraine, seeking to return prisoners of war, unlawfully detained civilians, and deported and transferred children. He noted that since February 2022, Canada had committed nearly \$20 billion in multifaceted support to Ukraine to provide financial, development, humanitarian, military, security and stabilization assistance, including \$358.2 million in humanitarian assistance to respond to the humanitarian impact of the invasion by the Russian Federation on Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Canada had also welcomed nearly 300,000 Ukrainians and their families under the temporary special measure to provide immediate assistance to Ukrainians fleeing the war.

79. He expressed concern about protection risks along migration routes to Europe, including violent pushbacks and the rising death toll at sea, and noted that while there was a decrease in mixed movements, the surge in arrivals through the northwest African route highlighted the need for enhanced search and rescue coordination, expanded safe pathways and lawful policy options to address irregular migration. Given those trends, he asked UNHCR to provide details on what measures were being taken to strengthen safe and legal pathways and prevent pushbacks. He reaffirmed the commitment of Canada to protection-centred, rights-based approaches that ensure the most vulnerable receive the support they need. While commending the programmatic emphasis of UNHCR on community empowerment, combatting gender-based violence and the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and children, he urged that funding provided to the organization to be effectively channelled to local implementing partners as well.

80. The representative of **Norway** said his country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States, condemned the continued illegal war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and called on the Russian Federation to comply with international law, cease all hostilities and facilitate urgent, safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to assist civilians in need at the front line and in areas of Ukraine controlled by the Russian Federation. He underlined that Norway would continue to provide support to Ukraine and affected neighbouring countries through the five-year Nansen support programme. He stated that the programme, established to support Ukraine's fight for freedom with military and civilian support, was extended to 2030 and included refugee response to its neighbouring countries, with the Republic of Moldova

as a priority. The Norwegian Government had also more than doubled its innovation support to Ukraine for 2025. He raised concerns about the downward trend of humanitarian financing for the Ukraine situation but commended support by UNHCR for early recovery, working in complementary ways with development actors to foster durable solutions, supporting local economy recovery and access to protection in line with the priorities and plans of the Government of Ukraine.

81. The representative of **Belgium** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland and condemned large-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, including the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Expressing her country's uncompromising support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, she called for a rapid end to the conflict.

82. She underscored her country's focus on integration and protection for vulnerable groups and asked UNHCR to provide details on its priorities for protection given the new financial reality. She commended the organization's work with local partners and cooperation with national authorities and welcomed the 2025-2026 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and the Regional Refugee Response Plan for Ukraine, which highlighted assistance in terms of protection, cash, shelter assistance and reconstruction and a particular focus on winterization.

83. The representative of **Türkiye** said that his country had supported millions of displaced Syrians for 14 years, was hosting over 2.8 million Syrians under a temporary protection scheme and was supporting millions of Syrians within the Syrian Arab Republic itself. He stated that Türkiye was also supporting the voluntary, safe and dignified return of Syrians at its six borders under the supervision of UNHCR, which had enabled 850,000 Syrians to voluntarily return from Türkiye to the Syrian Arab Republic, including 130,000 new returns since the fall of the regime. In addition, Türkiye had successfully launched the 'go-and-see' visits programme to allow Syrians to make well-informed decisions before their return. More than 14,000 Syrians had benefited from the programme between 1 January and 6 March 2025.

84. He emphasized that the return of Syrians and their socio-economic reintegration depended primarily on the elimination of security and accommodation problems as well as unhindered public services. Acknowledging the humanitarian funding situation, he identified the need to strengthen shelter facilities and provision of transportation assistance as priority. He stated that the upcoming Brussels Conference on Syria would discuss Syria's reconstruction and support for urgent needs. He commended the European Union's decision to suspend restrictions on the energy and transport sectors in the reconstruction process of the Syrian Arab Republic and to indefinitely extend the humanitarian exemption to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the country. He reaffirmed Türkiye's continued collaboration with UNHCR.

85. The representative of **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said her country aligned itself with the joint statement delivered by Poland on behalf of like-minded European States. She said that the United Kingdom supported a just and lasting peace in Ukraine and remained steadfast in its commitment to support the people of Ukraine. She thanked UNHCR for its critical work to provide vital humanitarian support to both Ukrainian refugees and those internally displaced within Ukraine. She reaffirmed the Government's commitment to work closely with partners to continue taking responsibility for the continent's security. In this regard, she announced that the Prime Minister was convening leaders to discuss the next steps to bring an end to the war in a just and permanent way that would allow Ukraine to enjoy its freedom.

86. The representative of **Armenia** said her country remained unwavering in its commitment to the principles of international protection and durable solutions in addressing the humanitarian needs of the 115,000 Armenian refugees forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 and appreciated the vital role of UNHCR, donors, NGOs and refugee-led and community-based organizations. She noted that in 2024, Armenia had committed to integrating refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh within its borders by allocating approximately 1 per cent of its gross domestic product, about \$208 million, to

support the integration process. In addition to the Government-led response to refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, a transition vision had been developed to transition from humanitarian response to long-term socio-economic inclusion by addressing the mid-term to long-term needs of refugees and host communities. She stated that the 2024 transition vision focused on addressing the employment and living conditions needs of refugees, strengthening national systems and local capacities, addressing residual humanitarian needs and ensuring inclusivity by implementing comprehensive support programmes, and strengthening operational cooperation and coordination with international financial institutions and development partners.

87. She announced that Armenia had made progress in fulfilling its pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and noted that one of the country's major successes was the amendments to the Law on Citizenship, which had resulted in a 50 per cent reduction in statelessness. She said that a temporary protection regime introduced in 2023 had granted refugees access to essential services such as education, healthcare, financial services, social protection and the labour market and called on international partners to enhance their support to the humanitarian response of Armenia to foster self-reliance and socio-economic inclusion of refugees in the country.

88. The representative of **Japan** reaffirmed his country's support to Ukrainians facing enormous challenges in the midst of the war and said that Japan had implemented over \$12 billion in humanitarian, financial and reconstruction support to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. Concerning contributions to the UNHCR operation in Europe in 2025, he noted that Japan had made an initial contribution to the organization to support its work in Romania and Ukraine and was also dedicating efforts to humanitarian demining based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach to create conditions for the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

89. The representative of **Kenya** said the loss of nearly 3,000 people along the three Mediterranean and northwest Africa maritime routes was an affront to the shared humanity of the international community and asked UNHCR to provide clarification on the steps it was taking to implement its Global Initiative on Protection at Sea, including its engagement with States. She asked for UNHCR to provide disaggregated data on the offered resettlement places in the Europe region based on nationality, gender, age and disability. Calling for global solidarity in responsibility sharing, she highlighted that out of the world's 32 million refugees, Europe had resettled approximately 14,200 in 2024. She requested more information on the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework regulation adopted in 2024 and additional information on refugees of other nationalities who had been granted asylum in Europe, including those from Africa.

90. With regard to funding, she emphasized the need to apply equal priority to solutions for other regions as had been applied for the UNHCR impact area four on Securing Solutions in Europe, which had the third highest budgetary allocation of 19 per cent and reminded that solutions had to correspond to all four objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees.

91. The representative of **Azerbaijan** pointed to an error that had been made concerning the name of the geographic unit of Nagorno-Karabakh which no longer existed. When referring to the former conflict it was referred to as Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh but when referred to as a geographic unit he emphasized that it should be referred to as the Karabakh economic region of the Republic of Azerbaijan. He further stated that contrary to allegations that the Armenian community had been forcefully displaced from their homeland, three United Nations fact-finding missions had determined that there were no forceful displacements registered in Azerbaijan.

The meeting rose at 1:00 p.m.