

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

Distr.: General
5 September 2025

English only

Standing Committee

Ninety-third meeting

17-19 June 2025

Held at the International Conference Center Geneva (CICG) ▪ room D

Summary record*, Tuesday, 17 June 2025, at 10.00 a.m.

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10:11 a.m.

Opening of the meeting

1. The **Chairperson** declared open the ninety-third meeting of the Standing Committee.

1. Adoption of the agenda (EC/76.SC.CRP.10)

2. *The agenda was adopted.*

Briefing on the Chairperson's visit to the Office's operations in Bangladesh and Thailand in March 2025

A video presenting the highlights of the visit was played.

3. The **Chairperson** gave a briefing on his mission to Bangladesh and Thailand from 21 to 29 March 2025, where he observed the scale of humanitarian needs and the impact of funding shortfalls on the operations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In Bangladesh, he had visited camps in Cox's Bazar, which hosted over 1 million Rohingya refugees, and he highlighted his concerns over protection risks, climate threats and the consequences of reduced assistance. He noted the increasing anxiety among refugees, staff and partners, particularly over cuts to food, fuel and essential services and emphasized the need for continued international support. He shared testimonies of refugees recently arrived from Myanmar, including accounts of violence and forced recruitment and reiterated that statelessness remained a key obstacle to voluntary return. He acknowledged Bangladesh's efforts to improve shelter conditions and support skills development, stressing the importance of expanding self-reliance opportunities.

4. In Thailand, the Chairperson visited the Tam Hin temporary shelter, home to 4,900 refugees from Myanmar and discussed the impact of reduced food and health assistance and the need for access to education and vocational training. He praised Thailand's commitment to protection and the steps the country took to end statelessness, including the recent accession to the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. Concluding, he urged sustained donor support, recognized the moral leadership of Bangladesh and Thailand and called for investment in refugee youth, stressing that the risks of inaction were too high.

5. The representative of **Bangladesh** welcomed the oral presentation by the Chairperson and thanked him for selecting Bangladesh for his mission. He appreciated the focus on the Rohingya crisis and recalled that his country, among the most climate-vulnerable ones in the world, was exposed to multiple natural disasters and that both the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char were in coastal areas highly prone to hazards. Despite concurrent high-level visits, including that of the United Nations Secretary-General, the government had prioritized facilitating the Chairperson's visit to illustrate the protection and climate-related challenges faced by Rohingya refugees and host communities. Since 2017, Bangladesh has hosted over 1.3 million Rohingya, in addition to 118,000 who arrived in November 2023 due to violence in northern Rakhine State. He emphasized the ongoing burden of the crisis on Bangladesh's environment, economy and security, noting that no refugee had yet returned.

6. He welcomed the announcement of a high-level conference on the Rohingya situation, to be held in September on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly and encouraged the full engagement of member States and active leadership from UNHCR. Expressing concern over chronic underfunding, he stated that as of 13 June 2025, only 22 per cent of the Joint Response Plan appeal for 2025-2026 had been met, despite the urgent needs. He called for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing from donors, humanitarian actors and development partners to ensure implementation of the response plan.

7. The representative of **Thailand** thanked the Chairperson for his reflections and for the appreciation expressed towards her government. She welcomed the recognition of Thailand's long-standing commitment to hosting displaced persons, many of whom have been in the country for decades. Reaffirming her country's commitment to addressing

statelessness, she noted progress following a cabinet decision to expedite acquisition of nationality by stateless persons, while acknowledging that further efforts were needed. She expressed concern about the impact of declining humanitarian funding on displaced populations and echoed the view that assistance in such circumstances is a moral imperative. She highlighted ongoing efforts to identify locally driven solutions, including capacity-building and training programmes. She concluded by reaffirming the commitment of her country to regional efforts towards a peaceful and lasting solution and welcomed the continued partnership with UNHCR and the international community in the pursuit of durable solutions and protection for those in need.

Opening remarks by the Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)

8. In her opening remarks, the **Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)** provided an overview of the global context, marked by increasing conflict, diminishing humanitarian funding and a growing number of forcibly displaced people, 122 million globally. She emphasized that solidarity with people forced to flee, the theme of this year's World Refugee Day, was more urgent than ever. She reported that as of May 2025, UNHCR was only 22 per cent funded, with \$2.4 billion available against a \$10.6 billion budget. Although donors had advanced or increased contributions, enabling reduced but ongoing operations, projections for 2025 indicated funding slipping to levels seen a decade ago.

9. She stated that UNHCR had undertaken substantial austerity measures, including a \$600 million cut in activities, reductions to headquarters and regional structures, the closure or downsizing of offices in 185 contexts and the discontinuation of 3,500 staff positions, while striving to preserve protection and emergency services. She stressed the need to prioritize life-saving responses, especially in low- and middle-income countries and protracted crises. The Deputy High Commissioner also shared that UNHCR will continue to strengthen partnerships with development actors such as the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and focus on localization, inclusion in national systems and access to employment. Despite a 40 per cent reduction in the value of funded partnership agreements, the organization has sought to shield national partners to the extent possible. She highlighted increasing instability in contexts such as Chad and Yemen and underscored that host countries, already affected by crisis, must continue to receive support. Internally, the organization faced low staff morale, increased use of psychosocial support services and growing pressure on grievance mechanisms. In response, UNHCR was expanding communication, career support and fraud risk management. She concluded by calling for renewed solidarity and shared responsibility, underlining that lasting solutions must be shaped by the needs and voices of refugees and stateless persons and that compassion must be matched by concrete action.

2. International protection

10. The **Assistant High Commissioner for Protection (UNHCR)** introduced the protection agenda by reflecting on 75 years of the mandate of UNHCR to protect displaced persons amid growing crises. She described the current global landscape as one of unprecedented strain, citing ongoing conflicts and violation of rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gaza, Haiti, the Sahel, the Sudan, Ukraine and other locations. She condemned deliberate attacks on civilians, displacement sites and humanitarian operations, as well as starvation being used as a bargaining tool and the weaponization of sexual violence. The Assistant High Commissioner highlighted the erosion of international protection norms, noting increasing pushbacks, deportations and restrictive asylum policies that violate the principle of non-refoulement. She acknowledged uneven responsibility-sharing, with three-quarters of refugees hosted in low- and middle-income countries, and criticized international aid cuts that risk diminishing political goodwill and reducing access to asylum.

11. Positive developments included ongoing collaboration with IOM on the route-based approach to mixed movements and complementary pathways led by countries such as Australia, Brazil, Italy, Slovenia, and members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Nonetheless, she cautioned that funding cuts were severely undermining the protection capacity of UNHCR. Critical activities have already

been affected, including reductions in child protection in operations such as Bangladesh, Chad, Egypt, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. She cited closures of community centres in the Syrian Arab Republic, reduced support for survivors of gender-based violence in Jordan, Lebanon and South Sudan and the suspension of documentation services in Colombia and Côte d'Ivoire. She stressed the impact on local and women-led organizations, many of which faced closure. She emphasized the importance of cooperation, referencing the Global Compact on Refugees and the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum, noting that the upcoming 2025 Global Refugee Forum Progress Review is a key moment to reassess efforts. She concluded by calling for urgent investment in sustainable responses, particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic, where 1.9 million returns have been recorded, and stressed the need to act collectively to address crises in Afghanistan, the Sudan, Ukraine and other overlooked contexts.

(a) Note on international protection (EC/76/SC/CRP.11)

12. The **Director of the Division of International Protection (UNHCR)** introduced the note on international protection, emphasizing that the 75th anniversary of the establishment of UNHCR coincides with a period of immense strain on the global protection landscape. She noted that displacement and statelessness were increasing in scale and complexity while resources to support protection and solutions were diminishing. The note outlined the work of UNHCR over the past year to protect and find solutions for refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons, in close cooperation with States and other partners. It highlighted both progress, such as the adoption of new laws that reflect international standards and improved regional cooperation, as well as significant gaps in protection and services due to funding shortfalls. She underlined the importance of national asylum systems, the route-based approach to managing mixed movements and legal safeguards such as the principle of non-refoulement. The report raised an alarm about the discontinuation of protection programmes for children, including those addressing child marriage and mental health and the closure or scaling back of services for women and girls at risk of sexual violence. Education remained a key concern, with half of school-aged refugee children out of school and girls facing major barriers. Economic inclusion and social protection for displaced and stateless persons had seen some progress through collaboration with development actors and international financial institutions, but more was needed. Furthermore, she highlighted the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, building on the #IBelong Campaign, as a key milestone. While 1.6 million refugees had returned in 2024, she recalled that resettlement places had declined and complementary pathways, though promising, could not replace robust resettlement efforts. In conclusion, she stressed that the international protection system was under unprecedented pressure and urged all member States and partners to recommit to protection principles, invest in durable solutions and uphold the rights of forcibly displaced persons.

13. The representative of **Canada** recognized the unprecedented challenges faced by UNHCR and commended the organization for its commitment to those under its mandate. He acknowledged the impact of funding shortfalls on the ability of UNHCR to maintain its field protection presence and deliver assistance, underlining the importance of preserving operational protection capacity despite ongoing restructuring. Stressing shared responsibility, he called on the international community to continue supporting the most vulnerable in cooperation with UNHCR and partners. He welcomed efforts to address the needs of asylum-seekers, refugees and host countries through multi-stakeholder partnerships and emphasized the value of a whole-of-society approach to strengthen protection and enable access to durable solutions. He stated that his country continues to welcome refugees via resettlement and complementary pathways, having resettled nearly 50,000 refugees in 2024 and reaffirmed the importance of non-refoulement and fair asylum procedures.

14. He welcomed his country's membership in the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and complimented its work and that of UNHCR in advancing support for stateless populations. He encouraged prioritizing protection in all programmes and decisions, calling for full implementation of the age, gender and diversity policy in UNHCR operations. He requested clarification on how refugee response plans will be prioritized and aligned with

humanitarian needs and emphasized that any streamlining of the protection architecture must preserve specialized expertise, especially in responding to gender-based violence. He reaffirmed his country's strong support to UNHCR during this transitional period and its enduring commitment to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol and the Global Compact for Refugees.

15. The representative of **the Sudan, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group**, expressed appreciation for the comprehensive note on international protection presented by UNHCR and reaffirmed the vital importance of international protection, particularly considering the unprecedented displacement crisis, global funding shortages and increase in inward-looking policies. She emphasized that Africa hosts over 50 million forcibly displaced persons, with the crisis in the Sudan representing the world's most severe displacement emergency and large-scale displacement in other countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She highlighted that protection is fundamental to human dignity and survival, requiring access to healthcare, legal assistance, education and protection from gender-based violence and exploitation, especially for women and girls. She stressed the need for targeted services and child protection interventions, including access to education and protection from forced recruitment and early marriage.

16. She expressed deep concern over critical underfunding, which has led to severe cuts in essential services, heightening risks for vulnerable populations. She called on the international community to increase flexible, predictable and unearmarked funding to UNHCR, ensuring continuity and effectiveness of essential programmes. She urged that responsibility-sharing must translate into tangible action, particularly in the lead-up to the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2025. She also emphasized the need to expand safe and legal pathways for refugees, including resettlement, family reunification and labour mobility opportunities and endorsed a comprehensive route-based approach to address mixed migration. She stressed the importance of addressing the root causes of displacement, such as violent conflict, political instability and climate-related disasters and called on UNHCR to reinforce its advocacy for peace and conflict resolution. In conclusion, she reaffirmed the Africa Group's commitment to international protection and called for strengthened cooperation, targeted funding and collective responsibility to turn protection commitments into tangible realities.

17. The representative of the **European Union, speaking on behalf of its member States**, thanked UNHCR for the note on international protection. She expressed deep concern over unprecedented funding cuts affecting the multilateral system, operational capacity and the lives of those in need of international protection and their host communities and extended solidarity to UNHCR and its staff during this transitional period. She reaffirmed the European Union's commitment to supporting forcibly displaced persons and their host communities, recalling pledges made during the Global Refugee Forums in 2019 and 2023 and emphasized continued support for the 1951 Convention and efforts to strengthen global protection and asylum space. In 2024, nearly one million individuals applied for international protection in the European Union, with almost 390,000 individuals granted protection at first instance. The European Union continues to provide temporary protection to nearly 4.3 million people, primarily women and children fleeing the war in Ukraine. She informed of the recent extension of this protection until March 2027 and highlighted efforts to modernize the asylum and migration system under the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, in cooperation with UNHCR.

18. Referring to crises in the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, she underlined that protection is foundational to the core humanitarian mandate and called for strategic investments in protection to reduce needs. She stressed the importance of maintaining protection as a collective priority in the current reprioritization processes, including the humanitarian reset and the UN80 initiatives and emphasized addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence, through inclusive, non-discriminatory approaches. She welcomed the ongoing work of UNHCR and IOM in addressing mixed movements of migrants and refugees using a route-based, rights-focused approach and concluded by calling for strengthened collective action, innovation and coordination to adapt to current challenges and ensure that emergency relief fosters sustainable development, peace and resilience.

19. The representative of **Ukraine** commended UNHCR for its efforts to deliver protection and find solutions for forcibly displaced persons globally. He recalled that, as highlighted in the 2024 Global Trends report, the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine continues to be one of the principal drivers of forced displacement worldwide, with approximately 10 million Ukrainians remaining displaced either within or outside the country and 12.7 million in need of humanitarian assistance. He noted that the escalation of large-scale aerial attacks on peaceful cities and continued military aggression has worsened the humanitarian and displacement crisis, with civilian casualties in the first five months of 2025 nearly 50 per cent higher than during the same period the previous year. He condemned these attacks as grave violations of international humanitarian law, constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity. He expressed gratitude to UNHCR for having reached more than 600,000 Ukrainians with protection responses in 2024 and underscored the importance of sustaining protection programming, particularly for internally displaced persons and returnees. He called for continued support for mental health and psychosocial services, housing solutions, targeted cash programmes and mine action efforts, identifying these as key enablers for safe and dignified returns.

20. He urged donors to provide sufficient funding to support the 2025 response plans of UNHCR for Ukraine. He welcomed the recent one-year extension of temporary protection for 4.3 million displaced Ukrainians in the European Union and expressed appreciation for the solidarity of member States of the European Union and other host countries. He also welcomed the establishment of a Special Envoy for Ukrainians in the European Union, tasked with coordinating with UNHCR and IOM and highlighted the strategic partnership between UNHCR and the Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine, particularly with regard to the support provided to Unity Hubs offering counselling and information on temporary protection and voluntary return. He concluded by reiterating Ukraine's readiness for a full and unconditional ceasefire aimed at achieving a just and sustainable peace based on international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant United Nations resolutions, and called on member States to influence the aggressor State to engage in good faith negotiations.

21. The representative of **Spain** said that his country aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its member States and thanked UNHCR for its comprehensive note on international protection. He expressed deep concern over the pressure placed on asylum systems, the reduction in available funding and the unprecedented rise in the number of displaced and stateless persons. He reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to the international protection regime and to the principle of non-refoulement, emphasizing the importance of defending human rights and upholding international solidarity. He stressed the urgency of strengthening multilateral cooperation and finding durable solutions to ensure a sustainable and effective response aligned with the Global Compact on Refugees. The representative highlighted the value of improved asylum systems and safe, legal pathways for protection, as well as regional initiatives such as the Santiago Commitment and the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) in Latin America and complementary pathways including family reunification, labour mobility and education-based opportunities.

22. He underscored the need for protection mechanisms that are accessible, sustainable and fully respectful of the rights of refugees, regardless of their background or identity and welcomed the publication of the 2024 Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability Report by UNHCR. He echoed the High Commissioner's concerns regarding the misuse of restrictive measures such as summary returns, outsourcing of responsibilities and arbitrary detention, reminding that international protection is not a political choice but a legal and moral obligation. He stated that his country remains committed to the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and stateless persons in line with its foreign policy goals on social cohesion and cooperation and commended initiatives that strengthen access to education, health, legal documentation, dignified employment and social protection, with particular attention to women, girls and other vulnerable groups. He acknowledged legislative progress on statelessness and called for intensified efforts to address this issue. On voluntary returns, he reaffirmed that such returns must always take place in conditions of dignity, safety and sustainability, supported by strong international cooperation for recovery and peace in countries of origin. He concluded by stressing the importance of predictable and sustainable

financing to enable UNHCR to fulfil its mandate, citing the High Commissioner's assertion that investing in protection is also an investment in global security.

23. The representative of the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** took note of the report on international protection and expressed his country's firm condemnation of the political instrumentalization of vulnerable individuals, as exemplified by the recent expulsion of over 250 Venezuelans by the United States of America to El Salvador. He stressed that this was not an isolated event but a deliberate act turning human beings into instruments of geopolitical pressure and also raised alarm over the invocation of outdated legislation, specifically a law dating back to 1798, which he claimed permitted the deportation of adolescents from the age of 14 and was being selectively applied on the basis of nationality and without regard for international protection standards. He criticized what he described as institutional silence, particularly by UNHCR, in response to the humanitarian impact of unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States of America, which he argued have contributed to forced displacement, economic collapse and the deterioration of basic services like healthcare and education in his country. He stressed that international protection must not become a privilege which is granted selectively, but that it remains a universal human right, or else the foundational principles of multilateralism would be eroded. He reiterated his country's support for durable solutions for refugees, including voluntary returns in conditions of sustainability and emphasized the need for policies grounded in solidarity and cooperation. He concluded by affirming that human dignity and life must never be compromised due to budgetary constraints or political agendas.

24. The representative of the **United Republic of Tanzania** said that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group and expressed appreciation to UNHCR staff for their tireless work. She highlighted the serious threat posed by unpredictable funding to the continuity of refugee operations, noting with concern that major international organizations, including the Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Save the Children have announced plans to close their offices and operations in the United Republic of Tanzania by 31 December 2025 despite the significant numbers of refugees hosted by the country. She expressed alarm at the deprioritization of refugee protection in operational planning, particularly the proposed reduction in support for police officers assigned to refugee camps and reaffirmed that protection must remain a core priority, alongside health and education, even amid financial constraints.

25. She also recalled that her country currently hosts over 240,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, including more than 40,000 new arrivals, predominantly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She pointed to the significant backlog in refugee status determination (RSD), noting that the last camp-based RSD was conducted in 2018, and the most recent urban RSD was carried out in 2022. While acknowledging budgetary constraints, she stressed that group recognition is not viable in all contexts and emphasized the importance of individualized assessments to pursue durable solutions. She expressed her country's readiness to collaborate with UNHCR to implement an accelerated, efficient RSD process. She further noted that during the 25th Tripartite Commission meeting in December 2024, the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR and Burundi reaffirmed their commitment to conducting a comprehensive protection and solutions-based assessment for Burundian refugees in the country, some of whom have held refugee status for over 50 years. Despite a lack of funding, her country has mobilized internal resources to initiate this process in refugee camps and will expand to areas hosting the 1972 Burundian caseload, appealing to the international community for support to reach over 150,000 Burundian refugees. In conclusion, she reaffirmed her country's commitment to its international obligations and to providing asylum and protection but cautioned that the burden must not be unfairly shifted onto host countries alone. She called for international solidarity and shared responsibility to deliver meaningful solutions that uphold both refugee dignity and host country resilience.

26. The representative of **Ecuador** expressed gratitude for the note on international protection and highlighted the urgency of bolstering international cooperation at all levels to address the unprecedented rise in forced displacement and the growing number of persons in need of protection, especially in the current context of diminishing financial resources. She reaffirmed her country's strong commitment to international refugee law and echoed the

urgent appeal of UNHCR for a more robust and balanced response, including the full respect of the principle of non-refoulement, the establishment or improvement of national and regional protection frameworks for vulnerable persons, the development of efficient asylum systems and the creation of opportunities for durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration. She underscored that her country, as both a place of transit and destination, continues to host tens of millions of refugees and migrants and strives to integrate them into national health, education and social protection systems, despite fiscal limitations. In this context, she welcomed the note's references to regional initiatives such as Cartagena+40 multi-stakeholder pledge, the Quito Process and the MIRPS, which help strengthen coordination among States and other stakeholders. She also emphasized the importance of inter-agency coordination with IOM, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to enhance protection measures and expand opportunities for complementary pathways and family reunification programmes, helping to prevent dangerous displacement journeys.

27. She acknowledged the urgency of addressing statelessness and, as a member of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, called on all States to guarantee the right to a nationality without discrimination, in line with commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum. In conclusion, she appealed to all international partners to maintain their support of multilateral and regional protection programmes, cautioning that funding cuts threaten the operational capacity of UNHCR and the efforts of States. She stressed that meaningful efforts are needed to meet development and protection needs and reaffirmed that international protection must remain a global good, sustained by political will and adequate financing.

28. The representative of the **Kingdom of the Netherlands** said that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its member States and acknowledged the significant achievements outlined in the note on international protection despite political and financial challenges. She welcomed the continued commitment of UNHCR to its comparative advantage in protection work, and while recognizing that not all protection activities could continue due to budget constraints, expressed appreciation for insights into the strategic decisions shaping the future protection work of UNHCR, including how these relate to the humanitarian reset initiative. The representative offered three reflections on these strategic considerations: first, the quality of national asylum systems and protection frameworks should be a decisive factor in determining the field presence of UNHCR and protection engagement; second, UNHCR should maintain its supervisory role, including through protection monitoring, even when field presence may be reduced; and third, UNHCR should play a critical role in strengthening national asylum systems. In this regard, she pointed out that the lack of political will of some countries to establish fair and functioning asylum systems remains a major challenge, one that was not explicitly addressed in the note and cautioned that such situations risk wasting precious resources.

29. She also reflected on return, localization and the route-based approach, stressing that the return of individuals not in need of international protection, including involuntary return in compliance with international standards, is vital for the credibility and effectiveness of, and public trust in, the protection regime. She commended the sustained commitment of UNHCR to community-based protection and reiterated support for meaningful refugee participation through grants that strengthen refugee-led organizations. However, she expressed concern about the impact of budget cuts on such organizations and requested more clarity from UNHCR on the effects on local partnerships. In conclusion, she welcomed the joint efforts by UNHCR and IOM on the route-based approach and expressed interest in engaging further with UNHCR, IOM and stakeholders from host, transit and origin countries to explore the opportunities and challenges involved in operationalizing this approach.

30. The representative of **Uganda** said that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group and expressed sincere appreciation to UNHCR for its report. Reflecting on the 75th anniversary of the establishment of UNHCR, she questioned whether the original intentions of the founders, to support all people regardless of origin, are still upheld today. She voiced concern that while the jurisdiction of UNHCR had broadened, mindsets and funding structures had not evolved accordingly and lamented the continued reliance on temporary, ad hoc funding. She noted with concern the

recent decisions to downsize operations, which disproportionately affect host countries like Uganda, where host communities are left to face the consequences.

31. She underscored that downsizing decisions must be accompanied by robust dialogue and consultation with host governments and called for coordinated risk mitigation. The representative emphasized that protection encompasses not only physical safety but also access to food, shelter, education, health and water and sanitation services and expressed alarm at the reported deprioritization of these critical sectors in her country, particularly given that UNHCR does not fund self-reliance programmes. While acknowledging the new strategy of sustainable responses, she argued that sustainability must not become a formalization of burden-shifting. Instead, she suggested that sustainable responses should serve to protect refugees, support host communities and relieve host countries of disproportionate responsibility. She concluded by calling for a sustainability model that prevents crises, promotes self-reliance and upholds holistic protection.

32. The representative of **Egypt, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group**, welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to address the needs of persons under its mandate. He expressed concern about the growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons globally, as well as the liquidity crisis impacting regional situation and the notable decline in repatriation rates since 2020. He emphasized the importance of supporting host countries based on the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing, particularly in a context of escalating global tensions and growing gaps in the international rules-based order. He noted that the upcoming High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2025 presented a crucial opportunity to take stock of collective progress and to fulfil commitments made at the last Global Refugee Forum. He expressed concern over the lack of a mandate of UNHCR in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reiterated the Arab Group's rejection of forced displacement and the use of such actions as tools of war, particularly in obstructing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. He also raised alarm over restricted emergency operations in the Sudan, where more than 12 million Sudanese have faced forced displacement, stressing that the crisis threatens regional stability and requires a comprehensive United Nations response and development support within the Sudan and in neighbouring countries.

33. He thanked UNHCR for its assistance to populations in Libya, the Sudan and Yemen and welcomed the organization's role in facilitating the return of 600,000 refugees since 2024. He expressed hope for the return of all refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic and advocated for a coordinated approach to recovery and reconstruction. He underscored the need to respect the 1951 Convention, to protect refugees and internally displaced persons from all forms of reprisal and called for the consistent use of terminology aligned with international treaties across United Nations documents to uphold consensus and properly distinguish between issues of migration and refugee protection. Finally, he stressed that safe and dignified returns are essential, especially given the considerable burden carried by host countries.

34. The representative of **Ethiopia** said that his country aligned with the statement delivered by the Sudan on behalf of the Africa Group and expressed gratitude to the High Commissioner for his recent visit and participation in the high-level dialogue in Addis Ababa on advancing refugee protection and support to host communities. While appreciating the continued global leadership of UNHCR, he expressed concern about the ongoing funding crisis and cautioned that the reduction of the field presence and essential services, including legal assistance, would exacerbate the suffering of displaced populations, especially in the East and Horn of Africa. He reiterated his country's commitment to inclusive policies that integrate refugees into national systems despite limited resources, considering that his country was hosting over 1.1 million refugees and asylum-seekers. He emphasized the importance of strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring access to civil and identity documentation and promoting local integration.

35. He called for the protection of the core principles of the international refugee legal framework, including non-refoulement, access to asylum and fair procedures, highlighting that such efforts must be grounded in equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. He also echoed the urgent need for sustained political and financial commitments to support voluntary repatriation and other durable solutions, stressing that without adequate resources, the path to solutions remains blocked for millions of displaced people in the region. He

underlined the need for a multi-stakeholder approach, noting that greater engagement from development actors and the private sector is essential but cannot replace the core responsibilities of States. He urged all donors and partners to step up their support, particularly for protracted and less visible displacement situations. In conclusion, he reaffirmed his country's cooperation with UNHCR and its commitment to advancing protection in line with international standards, stating that the international protection framework must be upheld and not weakened and that lasting solutions and dignity for displaced persons can only be achieved through cooperation and solidarity.

36. The representative of **Jordan** underlined the need for adequate, flexible and sustained funding, without which the credibility and effectiveness of the international protection framework were at serious risk, with the note on international protection underscoring the urgent need for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. While the number of refugees worldwide continued to increase, funding levels remain far below what was needed to meet even basic needs. Jordan reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to international protection, highlighting that for over a decade it has hosted approximately 1.3 million Syrian refugees. However, he cautioned that the widening funding gap is severely affecting refugee services in his country, particularly in education, healthcare and cash assistance. The continued provision of basic services and the issuing of work permits to Syrian refugees could not be sustained without international support that reflected the magnitude of needs and adhered to the principle of shared responsibility and called on the international community to urgently increase funding for refugee-hosting countries and for the core protection mandate of UNHCR. He emphasized that development efforts must complement, not replace, humanitarian funding and that protection must remain the Organization's top priority. He reaffirmed that voluntary, safe and dignified return remains the most viable and sustainable solution for Syrian refugees, and he welcomed the facilitation by UNHCR of over 400,000 voluntary returns to the Syrian Arab Republic. He added that this trend highlights the need to invest in conditions inside the Syrian Arab Republic that enable such returns. Concluding, he pointed out his country's role as co-convener of the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and stressed the importance of turning pledges into tangible outcomes ahead of the 2025 High-Level Officials Meeting.

37. The representative of the **Russian Federation** expressed support for the efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the international framework for the protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless individuals, which he stressed must remain the cornerstone of the work of UNHCR as the primary United Nations body in this field, grounded in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. He emphasized that the organization must remain non-political and guided by the principles of neutrality, humanity, independence and impartiality. The representative called on UNHCR to intensify efforts to reintegrate returning refugees and welcomed its work in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons. He expressed concern about individuals being expelled when seeking refuge and affirmed his country's support for the activities to eradicate statelessness. He highlighted the issue of mass statelessness in certain European countries and insisted that reducing the number of stateless persons, including in Europe, must remain a priority for UNHCR.

38. He reported that, on 3 June 2025, the government of his country submitted a new bill on asylum, introducing updated procedures for granting refugee status and reforming his country's legal framework related to migration. He explained that the bill aims to strengthen mechanisms for assisting foreigners seeking protection in his country while preventing abuses of the right to asylum. The law would simplify procedures while ensuring social guarantees and introduce four categories of protection: refugee, temporary refugee, political refugee and temporary protection, each based on criteria adapted to the national context. He noted that the number of stateless persons in his country is declining steadily and that, since 1992, around 800,000 stateless individuals have obtained Russian citizenship. In 2023, his country simplified its citizenship law to ease the process for stateless individuals, especially those with positive social ties to the country, and to eliminate statelessness among children. He concluded by reaffirming his country's commitment to these reforms.

39. The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** noted escalating tensions in the Middle East, driven by what he described as aggressive and unlawful actions of Israel, that had grave implications for international peace and security and had resulted in significant

humanitarian fallout, including mass displacement, destruction and the targeting of civilian infrastructure. He argued that these actions pose a serious threat not only to the rights and safety of affected populations but also to the core principles of international protection. He referred to events on 13 June, describing a large-scale war of aggression conducted in violation of international law, which targeted cities, residential areas, energy facilities and the infrastructure of a United Nations member State. He characterized these attacks as premeditated, unprovoked and in blatant defiance of international legal norms that had resulted in hundreds of civilians, including women and many children, losing their lives, which he asserted constitute war crimes. He further alleged that Israel and its Western allies have consistently and indiscriminately targeted civilians in Palestine and Gaza, while maintaining a hypocritical stance on human rights. He expressed appreciation to countries that have condemned the actions of Israel and affirmed that the Islamic Republic of Iran remains fully determined to defend its sovereignty, citizens and national security. He concluded by asserting the Islamic Republic of Iran's right to self-defence and stated that the country would persist in exercising this right as long as what he called the unlawful and aggressive actions by Israel continue.

40. The representative of **Norway** expressed appreciation for the briefing on international protection and reaffirmed her country's unwavering support for UNHCR and its protection mandate. Noting the alarming increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons, she highlighted the conflict in the Sudan as one of several examples where restrictions on humanitarian access and violations of international humanitarian law were of grave concern. She stressed that the rise in humanitarian needs, coupled with a sharp decline in funding, had immediate consequences for affected populations. While acknowledging that there had always been gaps between needs and resources, she described the current situation as unprecedented and called for bold measures from the humanitarian system, donors and governments. She recognized the difficult prioritization challenges faced by UNHCR and underscored the urgency of fostering collaboration among humanitarian, development and peace actors. She emphasized the relevance of this approach, particularly in return, repatriation and reintegration efforts, such as in the Syrian context.

41. She welcomed continued partnerships between UNHCR, the World Bank and other development agencies, as well as the collaboration with IOM on mixed migration flows. She voiced support for the route-based approach and acknowledged progress on the livelihoods agenda and efforts to promote self-reliance and social inclusion. She stated that her country continued providing unearmarked funding in solidarity with host countries and resettling refugees and encouraged other countries to do the same, especially given the current financial crisis. She concluded by stating that protection remains a key priority for her country, emphasizing the importance of upholding human rights, including women's rights and gender equality, and asserting that the centrality of protection must be at the core of a reformed humanitarian system to ensure principled and accountable responses.

42. The representative of **Chile** expressed gratitude for the presentation of the note on international protection. She recalled that during the submission of the annual human rights report before the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner had denounced the current trajectory of conflict, marked by a blatant disregard for international law and international humanitarian law, with deliberate attacks on civilians, the use of hunger as a weapon of war, obstruction of life-saving humanitarian aid and attacks on humanitarian workers, often without accountability. She also referenced the first parallel event of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Humanitarian Affairs Segment taking place that week in Geneva, which emphasized the need to prioritize and empower women and children at the centre of humanitarian action. She said that her country shared the High Commissioner's concerns, especially regarding the protection challenges facing women and girls who are victims of violence, and underscored the devastating effects of funding cuts on gender-based violence response initiatives. She argued for a genuine humanitarian reset and meaningful United Nations reform, focused on reorienting action towards gender equity, community empowerment and inter-agency coordination. She further highlighted that in July 2025, Chile would convene the first meeting of the follow-up coordination mechanism of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Chile 2024-2034, aiming to prioritize 15 actions for the region over the next two years, enhance cooperation, avoid duplication and foster coordination with other regional bodies addressing human mobility. She invited all member States to support this

process through the platform and concluded by reaffirming her country's support for UNHCR policies and guidelines that place people at the heart of humanitarian action.

43. The representative of the **Republic of Moldova** expressed appreciation to UNHCR for its report. He joined others in expressing deep concern over the unprecedented strain caused by escalating conflict, compounding crises and complex displacement situations globally. He highlighted the difficult position in which UNHCR finds itself due to limited resources and called for greater mobilization of funding to support targeted programmes capable of addressing the acute and complex needs of affected populations. He acknowledged the positive progress made in recent years to strengthen asylum laws and procedures and promote the inclusion of displaced and stateless persons. He emphasized the devastating impact of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, which continued to cause civilian casualties and the destruction of infrastructure. As a neighbouring country, the Republic of Moldova has directly experienced these effects, hosting over 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, around 75,000 of whom benefit from temporary protection legislation. However, he cautioned that current funding cuts risk worsening the situation and increasing the burden on Moldovan authorities.

44. On statelessness, he reaffirmed his country's support for the work of UNHCR and welcomed the establishment of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. He underlined the importance of international cooperation and reiterated his country's commitment to actively contributing, including by sharing national experiences. He highlighted national efforts, including accession to relevant conventions and the implementation of robust statelessness determination procedures. He also reported on the recent adoption of the 2025-2027 National Action Plan to integrate foreigners, including stateless persons and the establishment of an inter-agency working group to consolidate data and simplify procedures. He concluded by encouraging other countries to join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and to take concrete steps against statelessness, citing the Solution Seeker Programme as a valuable model and stating his country's interest in joining it in the future.

45. The representative of **Estonia** said that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its member States and began by thanking UNHCR for its dedication in ensuring the safety and dignity of vulnerable populations, facilitating crucial aid and helping to rebuild lives. She emphasized that the international community must not become desensitized to the root causes of displacement, particularly acts of aggression, which should never be accepted as inevitable. She called on the global community to uphold the rights and safety of affected populations and to send a clear message that violence, domination and disregard for the rules-based international order will not be tolerated. Referring to the war in Ukraine, she condemned the Russian Federation's unprovoked aggression and underscored the atrocities faced by civilians, including children.

46. She stressed that protecting refugees also involves preventing future conflicts, holding aggressor States accountable, rejecting disinformation and standing in solidarity with victims. She welcomed the voluntary return of 1.6 million refugees last year but noted that many of these returns occurred in fragile and unsafe conditions, emphasizing that no one should feel pressured to return and that each person deserves a fair and safe process. She acknowledged that UNHCR itself is undergoing challenging changes amid an unprecedented humanitarian funding crisis, which requires radical reforms. Nonetheless, she stressed the importance of maintaining a focus on the core mandate of the organization and making the best use of limited resources, particularly in durable solutions and support to internally displaced persons. She concluded by reaffirming her country's strong partnership with UNHCR and its continued support for the organization's critical work.

47. The representative of **Lebanon** said that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Arab Group thanked UNHCR for the note, and commended the organization for its tireless efforts in responding to complex emergencies, including in Lebanon. Acknowledging the pressures caused by the internal review process, she expressed confidence that UNHCR would overcome current challenges. She voiced concern over the significant and ongoing budget cuts affecting the humanitarian system, emphasizing that these are not abstract figures but have direct and devastating consequences for millions of refugees in her country, as well as vulnerable Lebanese host communities. These cuts have eroded vital services such as healthcare and basic assistance,

jeopardizing protection efforts, straining social cohesion and potentially fuelling civil and political unrest. She stressed that her country has consistently demonstrated a commitment to protection at immense national cost and that responsibility-sharing must be made more equitable. With funding shrinking, even the most well-meaning commitments cannot be sustained, leaving host countries like hers to bear growing responsibilities that exceed their capacities.

48. She highlighted the urgent need for durable solutions to the protracted Syrian refugee crisis, noting that it can no longer be managed as a short-term emergency after more than a decade. She argued that repatriation remains the most realistic and just solution, given changes observed in the Syrian Arab Republic. She explained that evolving conditions in the Syrian Arab Republic offer a real opportunity to begin serious preparations for return, especially as the country of origin has demonstrated goodwill, which would benefit not only host countries but also UNHCR. She emphasized that investing in conducive conditions in the Syrian Arab Republic and incentivizing returnees could ease pressure on host communities, reduce dependency on aid, relieve strain on international organizations, and, most importantly, restore the dignity of refugees by enabling them to contribute to post-conflict reconstruction. She concluded by reaffirming her country's commitment to work closely with UNHCR, the Syrian Arab Republic and international partners.

49. The representative of **Switzerland** began by thanking UNHCR for its note on international protection and noted that the international protection system is currently under unprecedented pressure, with a record number of displaced persons and a context marked by the erosion of humanitarian norms, a structural financial crisis and ongoing reforms that will fundamentally reshape UNHCR. Despite these challenges, he stressed the importance of UNHCR maintaining and even strengthening its central mandate in the humanitarian reset initiative, particularly to ensure that protection remains a core component in the new inter-agency coordination mechanisms. He underlined the need for adequate resources and technical expertise in key areas such as child protection and gender-based violence. He emphasized that sectors like education and health, which are vital components of protection, should not be abandoned due to funding cuts. Instead, he urged for clear alternative responses, including enhanced collaboration with UNICEF, the World Health Organization and local leadership, to ensure continuity of essential services.

50. Considering growing demands for effectiveness, he expressed his country's support for leveraging digital tools and emerging technologies, while upholding humanitarian principles, to improve the delivery of aid. He also underscored the critical importance of safeguarding the digital space from misinformation, disinformation and hate speech. In conclusion, he emphasized that the time for optional solidarity had passed; pursuing synergies and shared responsibility were now imperative. With the High-Level Officials Meeting in view, he called on States to mobilize additional resources and encouraged UNHCR to diversify its funding base, including from international financial institutions and the private sector.

51. The representative of **Germany** said that his country aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its member States and expressed appreciation for the tireless work of UNHCR staff in protecting refugees and other affected populations in increasingly hostile environments. He condemned the widespread disregard for international humanitarian law, which endangers civilians and those delivering life-saving aid, cautioning that the erosion of the rules-based international order and international protection frameworks cannot be allowed to continue. Referring to the latest global report of UNHCR, he noted with concern the convergence of record levels of forced displacement, prolonged conflicts lacking political solutions and an unprecedented funding crisis. He stated that his country, as a major bilateral donor, reaffirmed its commitment to international humanitarian efforts and urged other partners to increase their contributions in the spirit of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. He stressed the importance of maintaining the centrality of protection, especially amid widespread funding cuts and called for prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and response to be treated as life-saving measures, particularly for women and girls.

52. He welcomed ongoing efforts to simplify and consolidate the protection architecture, expressing hope for a more efficient and streamlined response. He said that his country

supports the intent of UNHCR to prioritize international protection as part of its review process and broader humanitarian reform initiatives, reaffirming that protection lies at the heart of the mandate of UNHCR. He emphasized the value of multi-stakeholder approaches and strengthened partnerships for protection and durable solutions, as promoted by the Global Compact on Refugees. Where political and security conditions allow, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic, he called for collective efforts to pursue lasting solutions. He ended by highlighting the importance of strong asylum systems in enabling protection, promoting inclusion and supporting durable solutions and commending member States that have recently enacted new legal frameworks in this regard.

53. The representative of **Austria** said that his country aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union on behalf of its member States and expressed appreciation for the dedication of UNHCR staff, both in the field and at headquarters, who work in challenging and often dangerous environments. He voiced concern over the record number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide, which now exceeds 120 million and cited human rights violations, political oppression, conflict and war as key drivers of this displacement. He stated that his country reiterated its commitment to the centrality of protection in humanitarian action. He noted that Austria's new federal government, which took office in March, has committed to ambitious reforms of the national asylum system in alignment with the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum. He stated that his country continues to support UNHCR and humanitarian actors in crisis regions, including in 75 refugee camps and promotes legal and safe pathways for displacement to neighbouring countries. He emphasized his country's efforts to create sustainable solutions on the ground and to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking, stressing the importance of legal and psychosocial support for victims. He mentioned that in 2025, his country had already received over 7,000 asylum applications, granting international protection in more than 3,000 cases and subsidiary protection in over 700. As a party to both United Nations statelessness conventions, his country commended recent international efforts to combat statelessness, notably the actions of Malaysia, Slovenia and South Sudan.

The meeting rose at 13:00 p.m.
