



General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 November 2024

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Seventy-fifth session

Summary record of the 766th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 15 October 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Gorely (Vice-Chair)(Australia)

Contents

Agenda item 3: High-level segment on statelessness and general debate (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



*In the absence of Ms. Stasch (Germany), Ms. Gorely (Australia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.
The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

High-level segment on statelessness and general debate *(continued)*

1. **Mr. Shamukuni** (Observer for Botswana) said that Botswana wished to acknowledge the efforts that had gone into organizing the second Global Refugee Forum in December 2023. To commemorate the tenth anniversary of the development of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024, it had undertaken a qualitative study to determine the extent and nature of statelessness in the country.
2. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, which had been passed by Parliament in August 2024, would, upon its entry into force, allow stateless persons to acquire Botswana nationality following a period of residence in the country. Moreover, the Births and Deaths Registration Act had been amended to enable abandoned children under 7 years of age to be registered as citizens of Botswana, and the Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act had been repealed and re-enacted, with amendments, to give effect to certain provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, provide for a four-step refugee status determination process and create the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees and the Botswana Refugees Committee.
3. A total of 289 refugees in Botswana were at an advanced stage in fulfilling the requirements for resettlement in the United States of America. Botswana had also stepped up efforts to integrate refugees, particularly persons in protracted situations and those who had arrived in the country as unaccompanied minors. The Government had begun to implement projects at the Dukwi refugee camp, including to rehabilitate the water supply infrastructure, maintain houses and build access roads and a conference centre.
4. Botswana continued to receive increasing numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers who had first fled to another country in search of protection. Such irregular onward movements resulted in inefficiencies, administrative duplication, delays and significant costs, in addition to being viewed as a form of misuse of the asylum system. Nevertheless, all onward movements were processed appropriately, and Botswana remained committed to receiving asylum-seekers.
5. **Ms. Sandkjær** (Norway) said that the tragic deaths of staff members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Lebanon was a stark reminder of the risks faced by humanitarian workers in the field and of the need for parties to conflict to respect international humanitarian law.
6. Armed conflicts on all continents had triggered a steep increase in humanitarian crises and had displaced millions. The devastating war in the Sudan had resulted in an extremely challenging displacement crisis both internally and in neighbouring countries. The situation in the Middle East was deteriorating, while the human suffering caused by the illegal war waged by Russia against Ukraine continued. The failure to respect international humanitarian law had an immediate and devastating impact on civilians and on the humanitarians trying to assist them, but it also emboldened other belligerents to ignore the rules of war. Norway continued to stress the importance of a comprehensive approach to humanitarian efforts, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
7. Protection had to remain the overarching priority of the Office's work. Addressing the specific vulnerabilities of women, children and young people was crucial. Displaced children and adolescents needed opportunities to grow and develop to their full potential. The prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence was deeply worrying. Norway urged UNHCR to enhance its efforts to prevent such violence and respond to survivors. It also wished to emphasize the importance of protecting LGBTIQI+ persons. As lead agency for the global protection cluster, UNHCR had a particular responsibility to coordinate and raise awareness.
8. With historically high numbers of forcibly displaced persons, many in protracted crises, the challenges in providing protection and support were overwhelming. Many crises were both underfunded and overlooked. Norway strongly supported the Global Compact on Refugees and the promotion of more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. It would continue to strengthen its own integration policies and to support the I Belong campaign to

end statelessness and the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, including the funding mechanism established in 2023. Furthermore, it welcomed the High Commissioner's commitment to providing system-wide follow-up to the mandate of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement and the budget proposal to focus more on sustainable programming and displacement crises. Norway remained committed to providing unearmarked, long-term funding and urged other Member States to close the current funding gap.

9. **Mr. Kostanyan** (Armenia) said that the world continued to witness the proliferation of crises and armed conflicts with grave humanitarian consequences and that the growing number of refugees and displaced people, especially as a result of the conflict in the Middle East, was of particular concern.

10. Over the previous year, Armenia had faced unprecedented challenges and had made great efforts to meet the needs of large numbers of forcibly displaced persons, including the 115,000 persons displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of ethnic cleansing in September 2023. It had been a huge responsibility for a small landlocked country to receive so many arrivals in the space of a few days. The sheer scale of the crisis was staggering. The arrivals had included 30,000 children and many other members of vulnerable groups, including pregnant women, older persons, persons with disabilities and persons suffering from chronic conditions. Although the Government had managed to overcome the emergency phase of the crisis, additional efforts were needed to address the refugees' medium- and long-term needs in relation to socioeconomic rights, housing and employment opportunities, among other issues.

11. The Government designed its policies with sustainable programming and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in mind. It had made significant voluntary commitments at the second Global Refugee Forum to support refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh and had already made progress in securing international support for, and implementing key aspects of, those pledges, including in collaboration with UNHCR. It was clear that work should continue until a durable solution was found, with the understanding that refugees should be made less dependent on humanitarian assistance. Accordingly, the Government had established the implementation of development programmes as a priority.

12. Armenia had hosted a considerable number of refugees throughout its history and had taken all possible measures to empower them and give effect to their rights. It had developed a legal refugee protection framework and recognized the value and untapped potential of refugees and displaced persons. In United Nations forums, it had often drawn attention to the vulnerability of people living in conflict zones and had advocated their protection and respect for the principles of international law. It firmly believed that Member States had a duty to develop early warning and early action mechanisms to prevent forced displacement, bearing in mind that delayed responses led to the suffering and deaths of innocent people.

13. **Mr. Ashkir** (Somalia) said that Somalia was in the process of overcoming a long period of instability during which governance structures, laws and systems had been severely disrupted. A major part of that process was to implement laws that protected the most vulnerable populations, particularly refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees.

14. To date, Somalia had registered close to 40,000 refugees and asylum-seekers. Its commitment to that cause was illustrated by the adoption, earlier that year, of the Federal Refugee Act, under which it intended to draw up a comprehensive plan for the establishment of a functional and transparent asylum system compliant with international law and human rights standards, to ensure the fair and efficient determination of refugee status, to equip the national authorities with the capacity to manage asylum claims effectively and to promote respect for the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. Its focus had also been on strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Commission for Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons and on honouring its pledges from the Global Refugee Forum, particularly those aimed at addressing climate-induced displacement and marginalization. The pledges were being incorporated into relevant domestic initiatives, including the Commission's five-year strategic plan and the National Transformation Plan 2025–2029.

15. The internally displaced persons bill, which was currently being debated in Parliament, was designed to address long-standing issues related to internal displacement and

to provide a legal framework that would enhance the protection and rights of displaced communities across the country.

16. While Somalia was grateful for the support of the international community, funding for the implementation of national initiatives remained insufficient, which limited the Government's ability to meet the needs of displaced populations. Although those needs remained substantial, there was a window of opportunity for all stakeholders to work together to enhance the capacity of host communities, expand access to basic services and create livelihood opportunities. Such a collaborative effort required flexible mandates alongside the continued fulfilment of responsibilities. Somalia therefore urged UNHCR to maintain its role in repatriation and reintegration.

17. **Mr. Yar Ahmadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he wished to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, marked by the mass displacement of millions, the bombardment of hospitals and refugee camps and the brutal genocide of civilians by the occupying Zionist regime, which his country strongly condemned.

18. The Islamic Republic of Iran had been hosting a significant number of Afghan refugees and displaced persons for many years, which posed numerous challenges related to infrastructure, resilience, healthcare, education, social relations and the environment. In 2024, over 1 million Afghan citizens had settled in the country as part of an ongoing influx. Since UNHCR had announced the end of its emergency response in Afghanistan in 2022, international support had significantly decreased, leaving the Iranian regime to shoulder most of the burden. The Government urged a return to the situation prior to 2022.

19. Despite the scarcity of national resources and the unjust unilateral sanctions imposed on it, the Government was spending billions of dollars each year on providing shelter, food, healthcare, education and other services to refugees. All Afghan students, regardless of their refugee status, had the opportunity to enrol in public schools. Consequently, there was a need to build new schools to accommodate them, which was reliant on the provision of adequate financial support by the international community.

20. Temporary solutions were insufficient. UNHCR had a duty to facilitate repatriation efforts in line with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees. The international community's failure to contribute to those efforts and to rebuilding infrastructure in Afghanistan was unacceptable. Given that focus had been shifting away from the Strategy for some time and that the budget for it continued to be reduced, UNHCR needed to take an active approach to ensure that the emergence of new crises did not cause the prolonged crisis in Afghanistan to be sidelined. Currently, only a fraction of the total cost of hosting Afghan refugees was covered by international resources. As the High Commissioner had repeatedly emphasized, the burden of responsibility should be shared. It was unjust, impractical and unsustainable for the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue to bear that burden alone.

21. **Mr. Sillo** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his country was currently hosting over 240,000 refugees, mainly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the year up to 30 September 2024, the Government, in collaboration with the UNHCR country office in Dar es Salaam and other stakeholders, had managed to find durable solutions for 17,283 refugees, of whom 12,717 had been voluntarily repatriated and 4,566 had been resettled in third countries. Despite that achievement, the country's refugee operations faced significant financial challenges, with a particular impact on healthcare and education. He therefore wished to underscore the urgent need for international solidarity.

22. The Government had been a prominent advocate of clean cooking fuels and had pledged to expand access to them. Firewood had been phased out at centres preparing food in refugee-designated areas. As focus shifted to the household level, more support was needed to minimize deforestation and combat climate change in areas surrounding refugee camps.

23. There were plans to conduct comprehensive interviews with all Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania by 2025 in order to identify and implement durable solutions. It was disheartening to observe successive generations of Burundians living as refugees, almost as if it were an inherited condition. He wished to appeal to the international

community for its support in conducting the interviews, which would be characterized by the utmost transparency and inclusivity. He also wished to thank all the stakeholders who had helped his country to ensure that refugees received the services they needed. However, unless steps were also taken to address the root causes of forced displacement and prevent conflict, those efforts would be in vain.

24. **Ms. Witbooi** (Namibia) said that Namibia was currently hosting 6,494 asylum-seekers and refugees, most of whom were women and children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Her Government was requesting the revocation of the cessation clause for those who were unwilling to repatriate to their countries, despite the return of peace in their respective countries.

25. Refugee movements had increased since the end of the cold war on account of political disturbances and repression, wars and natural disasters, among other factors. In Africa, refugees were also victims of human rights abuses, poverty, social inequality and environmental degradation, with innocent women and children being the most affected. The time had come for the international community to lay down arms and engage in dialogue in pursuit of peace and a world without refugees.

26. Namibia appreciated the Office's continued commitment to providing humanitarian and other assistance to persons of concern and was conscious of the challenges posed by the proliferation of conflicts and natural disasters and the significant humanitarian funding gap. It was important for UNHCR to collaborate closely with development actors and the private sector in a manner that adhered to the principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence.

27. Upon gaining independence, Namibia had acknowledged the crucial role of citizenship in ensuring a dignified life by offering naturalization opportunities to non-citizens residing in the country. In 2010, foreign nationals who had lived in the country from 1930 to December 1977 had also been granted naturalization to prevent statelessness. Furthermore, Namibia had made significant progress under the I Belong campaign and, following consultations on ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, had promulgated a bill to regularize the status of certain residents, their descendants and foreign spouses. It had also drafted a statelessness determination and protection bill and, in recognition of its own people's history as refugees, and in keeping with the spirit of pan-Africanism, had renamed the refugee identity card the African guest identity card, with the criteria for obtaining refugee status remaining unaffected. Despite some technical teething problems, the card would continue to be issued at the Osire refugee camp.

28. **Mr. Huseynov** (Azerbaijan) said that his country's sensitivity towards the issue of displacement was understandable given that, for three decades, it had been hosting one of the largest displaced populations in the world in per capita terms as a result of the military aggression and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Armenia. Today, in the wake of the 2020 war that had restored its territorial integrity and had created conditions conducive to the safe, dignified and voluntary return of displaced persons in the region, Azerbaijan had entered a new phase of post-conflict development.

29. The "Great Return" programme had been declared a national priority to be achieved by 2030. To that end, the Government had launched a series of activities aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and aimed at reconstruction and the eventual return and sustainable resettlement of internally displaced persons, whose views on returning had been sought in full conformity with international human rights law. The vast majority of those surveyed had expressed a desire not only to return but also to participate actively in rehabilitation efforts.

30. Security measures and infrastructure projects were currently being implemented, with particular emphasis on green economy approaches and smart villages such as Agali. Thanks to the Government's tireless efforts, the number of returnees had reached almost 9,000, with more than \$7 billion in State funds having been allocated to reconstruction activities.

31. Meanwhile, Armenia had razed residential areas to the ground and had contaminated the territory of Azerbaijan with mines and other explosive ordnance. In addition to a huge

number of internally displaced persons, Azerbaijan was hosting hundreds of thousands of people forcibly expelled from their ancestral homeland in Armenia. In that regard, the right of nearly 300,000 Azerbaijani refugees to return in safety and dignity had to form part of any long-term peace agreement.

32. Azerbaijan had successfully implemented its pledges from the first Global Refugee Forum, while ensuring the safe and dignified return of displaced populations in the region had been among its pledges at the second Forum. It was only through the fulfilment of accepted international commitments that just solutions could be found.

33. **Mr. Altandjiev** (North Macedonia) said that his country would remain an active and credible partner of the United Nations, and of UNHCR in particular. Bearing in mind that the right to a nationality was a fundamental human right, every country should take legislative steps to reduce statelessness and provide solutions to unregistered persons, especially minors, in their country of residence.

34. North Macedonia had amended its laws, including the Citizenship Act of November 1992, to provide for the acquisition of nationality by refugees and stateless persons and the registration of all births in the country, regardless of whether the parents were undocumented or stateless. All amendments had been made in accordance with the European Convention on Nationality, which North Macedonia had ratified in 2003. In October 2019, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia had adopted a law ratifying the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

35. North Macedonia had been declared a regional leader in efforts to eradicate statelessness and had made great progress in pursuing international cooperation in that domain. Through a multidisciplinary approach, it had enabled the acquisition of citizenship by nationals of the other republics of the former Yugoslavia and by nationals of the former Yugoslavia who had been living in the territory of North Macedonia at the time of independence. To date, it had granted citizenship to more than 1,000 such persons, of whom 270 had been stateless. In 2023, amendments had been made to the Civil Registry Act, the Identity Card Act and the Act on the Registration of the Permanent and Temporary Residence of Citizens to facilitate the issuance of identity documents to new citizens.

36. On the ninth anniversary of the launch of the I Belong campaign, UNHCR had acknowledged the progress in combating statelessness made by North Macedonia, which was a pillar of peace, stability and security in the Balkans and beyond. Nevertheless, it was the joint responsibility of all nations to find permanent and sustainable solutions to the issue of statelessness.

37. **Mr. Dávalos** (Ecuador) said that the alarming and unprecedented rise in displacement had to be addressed through a human rights-based approach and the provision of appropriate assistance. Ecuador appreciated the Office's efforts to deal with mixed movements and had witnessed at first hand the results achieved by UNHCR on the ground in collaboration with other relevant organizations.

38. Faithful to its humanitarian tradition, Ecuador stood in solidarity with the persons it hosted and had made the protection of rights in the context of human mobility a policy priority, even in the face of major economic challenges. It had carried out a regularization process for the benefit of 96,000 people, including unaccompanied minors, in 2022 and 2023, and was about to launch a new process covering an additional 94,000 persons, with the ultimate objective being to regularize the migration status of 300,000 Venezuelan citizens in the country.

39. Ecuador wished to congratulate UNHCR on successfully organizing the second Global Refugee Forum and would report in due course on the fulfilment of the pledges it had made at the Forum, including to join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and strengthen integration opportunities for refugees and migrants.

40. There was a need for greater international cooperation to ensure continued respect for the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing in support of host countries and communities. With that in mind, and in keeping with the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection, Ecuador had proposed a mechanism to channel funding from non-traditional and mixed sources, including the private sector, philanthropy and

development banks, to support host and transit countries in their efforts to care for and integrate refugees and migrants.

41. **Ms. Dinha** (Zimbabwe) said that, in the wake of the second Global Refugee Forum, it had been strengthening the refugee protection environment, including through an ongoing initiative to amend the Refugees Act to align it with the Constitution and international best practices.

42. In addition to the 150 ha of arable land that had already been provided for irrigation projects at the Tongogara refugee camp, the Government had made 25 ha of land available to promote agricultural entrepreneurship by refugees and host communities and thereby help to eradicate hunger, poverty and gender inequality.

43. As part of a whole-of-society approach to refugee protection, the Government was strengthening its cooperation with the private sector and other stakeholders, including in the areas of education, agriculture, climate action and energy. To halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss at the Tongogara refugee camp, it had taken steps to establish a woodlot of 6,000 trees and intended to plant 20,000 trees by 2027. It fully supported the localization of humanitarian action and had facilitated the establishment and registration of four refugee-led organizations to promote the meaningful participation of refugees in matters affecting them.

44. Zimbabwe welcomed the focus of the current session on ending statelessness. All migrants in the country enjoyed access to birth registration and national identity cards, while the status of more than 10,000 third-generation families from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia had recently been regularized through a mobile registration campaign. In addition, the Government had resolved technical glitches that had been affecting the processing of refugee travel documents since 2022.

45. As a host country, Zimbabwe called on international partners to provide more unearmarked resources for the benefit of the people under its care. It wished to commend the High Commissioner for his able leadership in advocating the protection of refugees at the Tongogara refugee camp and elsewhere, and to pay tribute to UNHCR staff and other humanitarians who had paid the ultimate price in the line of duty.

46. **Mr. Uema** (Brazil) said that the Pact for the Future was an ambitious document focused on sustainable development, climate change adaptation, fostering the participation of developing countries in the global financial system and transforming global governance, aspirations that seemed at odds with the long and difficult process that had been required to adopt the Pact.

47. While global military spending had reached an all-time high of \$2.4 trillion in 2023, the number of people affected by hunger had increased by 152 million since 2019, with the hardest-hit countries continuing to be in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The definition of a refugee enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees did not encompass mixed flows, yet forced displacement was increasingly driven by socioeconomic vulnerabilities. When migrants from the Global North had arrived in Brazil in centuries past, they had been welcomed generously. By contrast, modern-day migrants from the Global South faced numerous restrictions irrespective of their reasons for moving.

48. Artificial intelligence, climate change and large-scale migration would alter the course of humanity. Despite that, the global movement of people remained underdiscussed. There was a need to develop an emancipatory governance system that reflected Global South perspectives and to adopt a more contemporary approach that was protective and welcoming in equal measure.

49. Since 1997, in line with the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Brazil had granted refugee status to individuals from countries experiencing grave and widespread human rights violations. The Government wanted refugees who entered the country to stay there. Accordingly, it promoted their full integration into society by affording them access to public services, the labour market and social benefits on an equal footing with citizens in most cases. Access to healthcare, including mental health and psychosocial support, was provided regardless of migratory status.

50. Through the “Operation Welcome” initiative, a multisectoral task force was coordinating the country’s response to the unprecedented influx of Venezuelan refugees and migrants. One of the key pillars of that response had been a programme to support the voluntary relocation of nearly 140,000 refugees and migrants from the border region to over 1,000 municipalities across Brazil, where they could find better opportunities for work and social integration.

51. He noted with concern that the resources allocated to the Americas in the needs-based budget had been increased only minimally, despite the efforts of countries in the region to respond to massive influxes of migrants in recent years. Of equal importance, amid escalating conflicts and resource shortages, was the continued provision of technical and financial support by UNHCR to host countries, particularly during emergencies such as the floods that had struck Rio Grande do Sul earlier in 2024.

52. Last but not least, he wished to congratulate Brazilian national Sister Rosita Milesi, the Nansen Refugee Award global laureate for 2024, along with the four regional winners.

53. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that Somalia was to be commended for adopting the Federal Refugee Act and drafting the internally displaced persons bill. Domestic security challenges made it all the more important to have laws and practices in place to address internal displacement and break the cycle of conflict, climate change and displacement that had plagued the region for so long. The voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees would continue to be a focus of UNHCR. Although it did not make as many headlines as in the past, the situation in Somalia should not be forgotten by the donor community.

54. For decades, the United Republic of Tanzania had extended its hospitality to generations of refugees from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, among other countries. In dealing with Burundian refugees, he agreed that emphasis should be placed on local integration and resettlement in third countries, but also on repatriation to Burundi. If donors and other partners wanted voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation to remain a viable solution, they needed to invest in the reintegration of refugees in Burundi to avoid cyclical displacement. UNHCR would continue to help the Tanzanian Government to mobilize resources to address the environmental impacts of hosting refugees. He trusted that measures to assess remaining populations in refugee camps would be carried out in full compliance with international law.

55. He wished to congratulate Botswana for reducing statelessness, re-enacting the Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act and carrying out work at the Dukwi refugee camp to make assistance to refugees more sustainable. It was important to recognize that a route-based approach did not apply only to people moving northward. Flows also went in other directions, especially in Southern Africa.

56. He noted the challenges that Namibia faced as a result of mixed movements through the region and of some individuals’ refusal to be repatriated, which was an issue that should be explored. He welcomed the vibrant appeal for peace made by the representative of Namibia and wished to thank her for recalling her own country’s history in that respect.

57. The expansion of efforts to allocate land in Zimbabwe was a positive development. In Africa, and particularly in the subregion, investing in agriculture was what would make the situation of refugees and host communities more sustainable. UNHCR stood ready to support Zimbabwe by mobilizing resources from development actors, especially those working in agriculture, land conservation and biodiversity preservation.

58. Among other topics, the Pact for the Future addressed sustainability, which underpinned many of the discussions held in the Executive Committee. He was grateful to the representative of Brazil for mentioning the Pact and for recalling that, for decades, Brazil and other countries in the region had accepted refugees and migrants, particularly from Europe. It was an important reminder for countries that now faced flows in their direction and were not always welcoming of them. The “Operation Welcome” initiative was a good example of the specific refugee practices that Brazil had put in place. The fact that Sister Rosita Milesi had been named the Nansen Refugee Award laureate for 2024 was in part a reflection of the engagement of Brazilian civil society in refugee responses. He was

pleased to be visiting Brazil before the end of 2024 to witness at first hand the efforts being made.

59. His admiration for the steps taken by Ecuador to address the issue of human mobility and ensure the inclusion of Venezuelan and other refugees and migrants was well known. The regularization processes that were being implemented in that regard set an example for other countries to follow in how to deliver inclusion in practice. UNHCR would continue to lend its full support to Ecuador and to the process, including by seeking to mobilize additional resources from banks and the private sector.

60. It was crucial to recognize that the Islamic Republic of Iran had been hosting refugees for generations and had been a pioneer of inclusion in education, healthcare and employment despite facing serious challenges. UNHCR remained committed to helping the country to mobilize resources and to working under the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees and the associated Support Platform. Although securing investment in Afghanistan to create the conditions for people to return home was not easy, UNHCR would continue to strive to fulfil its mandate and support host countries.

61. He wished to thank Norway for its incredible support for UNHCR and its representative for drawing attention to the key issues of sexual and gender-based violence and respect for international humanitarian law, which were intimately linked insofar as such violence was often used as a tool of conflict, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. UNHCR would continue to focus on protecting LGBTQI+ persons and other vulnerable groups and was committed to supporting the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement.

62. While UNHCR would continue to work with Armenia to provide humanitarian assistance and long-term solutions to the refugees who had entered the country since September 2023 and with Azerbaijan to meet the needs of displaced persons, he hoped that ongoing peace talks between the two countries would bear fruit, as that was the only way in which solutions could be found to all forms of displacement in the region.

63. Lastly, North Macedonia deserved praise for the extraordinary efforts that had taken it to the brink of eradicating statelessness and for being a member of the new Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

64. **Ms. Aldjineh Garfa** (Chad) said that her delegation wished to express appreciation for the efforts made by the High Commissioner and UNHCR to provide multifaceted support to assist Chad in dealing with the challenges posed by forced displacement. In line with the commitments it had made under the Global Compact on Refugees, Chad had adopted the Asylum Act in 2020 and the Act on the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in 2023. At the Global Refugee Forum, Chad had made seven pledges relating to support for refugees in the areas of employment, health, education, legal aid and legal assistance, and the provision of documentation. The eradication of statelessness lay at the heart of the country's strategies. During the high-level segment on statelessness in 2021, Chad had pledged to issue large numbers of birth certificates, including in connection with late registrations, to refugees and internally displaced persons, and it had delivered on that pledge.

65. With 1.7 million forcibly displaced persons, representing 4 per cent of its population, Chad had the second-largest refugee population in Africa and was among the top ten host countries globally. Since the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan in April 2023, the National Commission for Refugee and Returnee Assistance, UNHCR and IOM had recorded an influx of more than 650,000 refugees and more than 230,000 returnees from that country. In the previous week alone, approximately 25,000 new arrivals had been registered. Those numbers were in addition to the 600,000 refugees from Darfur who had been living in camps in Chad for two decades. The presence of so many refugees placed a burden both on the Government and on host communities; her delegation wished to appeal to donors to commit to an integrated response to the needs of refugees, returnees and host communities through a regional plan. Chad currently received only around one quarter of the \$630 million it required for humanitarian aid for those groups.

66. Her Government sincerely wished for a negotiated political solution to the conflict in the Sudan. It also wished to reaffirm its commitment to working with its technical and financial partners in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to ensure autonomy for

forcibly displaced persons and the communities that hosted them. She called upon the international community to accompany their efforts with flexible, non-earmarked contributions that would enable UNHCR to respond effectively in Chad. She reiterated the call for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing in addressing the needs of persons of concern to UNHCR. The borders of Chad would always remain open to receive mass influxes of refugees.

67. **Mr. Borrell** (Observer for Panama) said that, owing to its geographical location, Panama was a key logistics hub for global exchange. Nevertheless, providing an effective response to the causes and consequences of mixed movements of people arriving in the country in an irregular manner was a critical challenge that necessitated international solidarity and cooperation and one that should be shared equally in order to identify long-term solutions.

68. Panama had strengthened its capacity to uphold the fundamental rights of persons seeking international protection, in close collaboration with UNHCR and civil society. It had in place special protections for women, and, in a pioneering step in the region, it had listed gender as an accepted ground for claiming asylum. The comprehensive mental health protocol for refugees guaranteed access to specialized services to address trauma and stress caused by displacement.

69. Panama was a signatory to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and placed high priority on the protection of such persons. In recent years, as migration through the Darién forest had increased, birth registration services had been set up for the children of refugees and migrants, some of whom had been born in the forest, and the authorities were taking proactive steps to process cases of statelessness and to provide affected persons with work permits to encourage their social and economic inclusion.

70. The arrival of more than 500,000 persons in 2023 had had a profound impact on the country, particularly in the Darién National Park, the country's main forest reserve and ecological lung. Incalculable environmental damage had been caused, directly affecting Indigenous Peoples in the area. Despite the enormous challenges, Panama had maintained its policy of solidarity and allocated more than \$100 million to the management of the situation. His delegation wished to thank UNHCR for its leadership and urged the international community to work together to find comprehensive solutions to the problem.

71. **Mr. García** (Observer for Honduras) said that, under the leadership of its first female President, Honduras was committed to prioritizing the protection of human rights, social justice and dignity for everyone, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. The current context was complex, with historical challenges including poverty, inequality, violence and the effects of climate change. The social protection system was a central pillar of the Government's approach, with special attention given to migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons.

72. As a member of the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework, Honduras was part of joint efforts to address the causes and consequences of forced displacement in Central America and Mexico. The Government placed emphasis on improving access to documentation, including birth certificates for the children of migrants and refugees. With support from UNHCR, it was striving to offer local, durable solutions for displaced persons and design inclusion and integration policies to facilitate sustainable livelihoods for migrants and refugees.

73. The principle of *jus soli* was recognized in the Constitution, thereby helping to avoid statelessness. Honduras was a signatory to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and was making efforts to achieve the goals established as part of the I Belong campaign.

74. In the area of protection for women and vulnerable groups, Honduras had made significant progress in the fight against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, including by strengthening its legal framework and implementing policies that sought to punish perpetrators and provide comprehensive support to victims. It had also increased spending on education and instituted programmes to support children and young people in situations of vulnerability.

75. Migration, both by Honduran nationals and by persons transiting through Honduras, remained one of the biggest challenges facing the country. In that regard, a coordinated regional response was crucial. The President was driving efforts to improve international protection mechanisms and ensure that asylum-seekers were treated fairly and with dignity, in line with international law. While the challenges were enormous, Honduras was committed to building fairer, more inclusive policies locally and globally and finding innovative, sustainable solutions.

76. **Mr. Matembo** (Zambia) said Zambia had continued to provide refugees and persons of concern with a wide range of services, including civil registration and documentation, access to basic services and to justice and protection for individuals with specific needs. It was making efforts to eradicate statelessness, promote livelihoods and self-reliance and foster coexistence between persons of concern and host communities. In February 2024, the Government had launched the country's first-ever national refugee policy and implementation plan, which set out clear guidelines on refugee management and protection.

77. At the second Global Refugee Forum, Zambia had made 10 strategic pledges, in areas including the enhancement of local integration, the empowerment of refugees through diverse livelihoods, the digitization of civil registration and the inclusion of refugees in the Farmer Input Support Programme. Other areas included access to electricity and sustainable energy, inclusion in education and sports, art and culture, and alternatives to immigration detention. In June 2024, part of the Meheba refugee settlement had been connected to the national grid for the first time. In 2024, public and private institutions had signed a memorandum of understanding to increase the number of scholarships and bursaries made available to persons of concern in tertiary education.

78. The Government had developed a national action plan for eradicating statelessness, to which refugees were particularly vulnerable owing to a lack of documentation and had made progress in enabling the issuance of birth certificates in districts housing refugee settlements. It was also acting to harmonize legislation on refugee management and protection and planned to accede to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In addition, Zambia had joined the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

79. Zambia had been affected by changing weather patterns caused by El Niño, leading to a strain on resources, further exacerbated by budget reductions, which had had an impact on citizens and persons of concern alike. Nevertheless, it continued to have an open-door policy for asylum-seekers from neighbouring countries.

80. In September 2024, the World Bank, through the twentieth replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA20), had approved a grant of \$30 million to foster economic opportunities for refugees and host communities and develop health, education and road infrastructure in the Meheba refugee settlement. The grant would also enable the provision of support for a review of the Refugee Act and the digitization of services offered by the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees.

81. **Mr. Olumuyiwa** (Nigeria) said that Nigeria urged States parties to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees to uphold their obligations thereunder and to adopt collective strategies that addressed current realities. Deeper cooperation was required with regional organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to tackle the root causes of displacement, in particular conflict, economic instability and environmental degradation.

82. In marking the tenth anniversary of the I Belong campaign, Nigeria wished to reaffirm its commitment to championing efforts to end statelessness, as demonstrated by its adoption of a national action plan for that purpose. In fulfilment of a pledge made in 2019, it had established a statelessness determination procedure. Nigeria welcomed the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

83. Climate change-related challenges, including drought and the shrinking of Lake Chad, together with conflict and worsening insecurity, had led to internal displacement in Nigeria, where 3.6 million internally displaced persons lived in camps and a further 2.9 million lived in host communities, in addition to 108,000 asylum-seekers from 47 countries. The Government had put in place an array of favourable policy and legislative measures to

guarantee inclusion for persons of concern, in fulfilment of the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. The scale of displacement in Nigeria required comprehensive and sustained support from partners.

84. His delegation wished to underscore the need for sustained investment in the development of host communities and the implementation of refugee-inclusive national policies and for the equitable sharing of responsibilities. Since the second Global Refugee Forum, Nigeria had made robust efforts to implement its pledges by ensuring access for refugees to healthcare, education and legal documentation, as well as by empowering them through the provision of agricultural land.

85. In the face of a steady flow of arrivals from neighbouring countries, Nigeria was committed to promoting equal rights for refugees, including through the issuance of identity cards, and remained resolute in addressing the challenges of displacement against a backdrop of heightened humanitarian needs inside and outside the country. Efforts were being made to advance return and resettlement strategies, and the Government had facilitated the voluntary return of its own citizens through a tripartite agreement with Cameroon and UNHCR, as well as the return of 18 refugees to Côte d'Ivoire.

86. In August 2024, Nigeria had commemorated World Humanitarian Day, spotlighting the need to protect humanitarian workers and civilians and demand accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. It mourned those humanitarian workers who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

87. **Mr. Hasan** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan, as a major host country for refugees, was cognizant of the growing displacement crisis worldwide. Pakistan had hosted Afghan refugees over four decades during multiple crises and had been on the frontline of the war on terror for 20 years, at great human and economic cost. More than 3 million Afghan nationals, both documented and undocumented, were currently living in Pakistan. They were provided with education and healthcare and were free to maintain their identity and traditions without restriction. Some Afghan youths who had been raised in Pakistan had become internationally renowned sportspersons and won laurels for Afghanistan.

88. Despite the several recent crises, including the climate change-induced floods of 2022 and the rising wave of terrorist attacks, that had affected the economic capacity of Pakistan, it had continued to support Afghan refugees. It was important, however, to recognize that protracted refugee situations, once regarded as stable, could face new humanitarian challenges owing to climate change, public health crises or insecurity; international attention must not, therefore, be diverted.

89. The future of Afghan refugees lay in Afghanistan, and it was necessary to create conditions that were conducive to voluntary return. His delegation wished to commend States that had provided third-country resettlement opportunities for Afghan nationals for their efforts. The pace of such resettlement should be expedited. The international community had a shared duty to give refugees hope, dignity and the chance of a better future.

90. **Mr. Daka** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia was host to more than 1.1 million refugees and asylum-seekers and had always kept its doors open to persons seeking international protection. The country had made good progress in enhancing refugee protection and self-reliance. At the Global Refugee Forum, it had made bold commitments in the areas of inclusion, climate action, the provision of arable land and digital connectivity. Its efforts needed to be accompanied by meaningful pledge-matching.

91. With a view to ending statelessness, Ethiopia had taken measures to include refugees in the civil registration and vital statistics systems, parts of which were now digitized. Innovative approaches were needed in order to support refugees in a more sustainable manner, particularly those living in protracted situations without a solution in sight, and ease the pressure on host countries. The Government firmly supported recent discussions on more sustainable programming through the creation of strong linkages between humanitarian assistance and development interventions. His delegation would welcome more information about financing arrangements and wished to encourage UNHCR to provide platforms for further discussion to create a common understanding among stakeholders.

92. In host communities in Ethiopia, access to clean energy remained very limited, and the presence of refugees increased the strain on the local environment. The Government had mainstreamed climate action and resilience in its refugee response programming, with a focus on environmental conservation and rehabilitation in host areas. The country's refugee response continued to suffer from serious underfunding in the face of a surge of arrivals fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries. Ethiopia had taken a prima facie approach to recognition of refugee status of groups arriving from the Sudan. Timely financial assistance was critically needed to save lives and provide basic services to refugees.

93. His delegation would welcome the High Commissioner's views on the role of UNHCR in finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons, of whom there were a large number in Ethiopia, particularly owing to climate change.

94. **Mr. Bimenyimana** (Observer for Burundi) said that Burundi was currently hosting 1,118 persons who were at risk of statelessness and, as part of preparations to join the I Belong campaign, a national action plan to combat statelessness was being designed.

95. A total of 88,721 refugees and asylum-seekers were present in Burundi. Many lived in camps, including in Musenyi, where refugees and returnees benefited from effective community integration measures. Between 2017 and October 2024, 250,000 of the country's own citizens had returned from locations where they had sought asylum. Voluntary return, in a safe and dignified manner, was now being promoted among nationals of Burundi living as refugees in Tanzania. The Government intended to enter into tripartite agreements with UNHCR and host communities to examine next steps. The Government was seeking to foster cohesion among returnees and host communities through comprehensive community development projects focused on self-reliance and income-generating activities.

96. His Government wished to reiterate its commitments to international conventions concerning refugees and asylum-seekers and would contribute to their protection to the extent that it could. It invited UNHCR to coordinate efforts to repatriate and reintegrate refugees from Burundi.

97. **Ms. Pratt** (Observer for Liberia) said that Liberia was home to 1,851 forcibly displaced persons. Thanks to the efforts of UNHCR and partners, the number of refugees had dropped; however, continued progress required sustainable solutions, in particular through the implementation of the updated regional road map for comprehensive solutions for Ivorian refugees adopted in September 2021 by Liberia and other States members of ECOWAS, together with UNHCR and other development actors. A total of 927 Ivorian refugees had acquired a Liberian residence permit, while others were seeking or had obtained Liberian citizenship; a further 658 remained undocumented. The Government had shown goodwill by directing ministries and agencies to ensure that Ivorian refugees were able to obtain civil registration documents.

98. The Government was concerned about the arrival of 40,000 nationals of Burkina Faso and a further 400 from Mali, who were living deep in previously uninhabited forested areas in the south-east of the country. The challenging process of civil documentation had begun with the issuance to some 7,000 people of temporary protection documents for up to 90 days under the ECOWAS Protocol relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment; however, those persons were no longer covered by the ECOWAS documents, which had resulted in additional administrative complexities. Liberia hoped to convene a high-level national dialogue with UNHCR to find durable solutions to the situation, which was becoming a national security concern. The Government wished to apply an out-of-camp approach to the provision of humanitarian assistance for persons of concern.

99. Liberia had signed the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness and had implemented 90 per cent of the pledges it had made in that context. Thanks to advocacy from the African Union, ECOWAS had agreed to fully fund the processing of naturalization documents for 310 former refugees from Sierra Leone who had been at risk of statelessness for 14 years. Following an appeal made by the President of Liberia before the General Assembly, Liberia had safely repatriated 1,593 former refugees; another 2,700 were expected to be repatriated from Ghana by November 2024 and a further 2,000 from other Mano River Union countries by December 2025.

100. **Mr. Conde** (Guinea) said that Guinea was known for its traditional hospitality and generosity. In the recent past, conflicts in the neighbouring countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire had given rise to an unprecedented influx of hundreds of thousands of people seeking refuge within its borders. In accordance with its international obligations, Guinea had granted them refugee status on a prima facie basis. Following the revocation of that status in June 2022, Ivorian nationals, who had constituted 80 per cent of the refugee population in Guinea, had begun to return home. Voluntary repatriation was the most suitable durable solution to refugee situations.

101. There were currently 2,322 refugees of various African and Asian nationalities in Guinea. More asylum-seekers were arriving every day; those who were granted refugee status were guaranteed physical and legal protection.

102. The Government's main priority was to strengthen its asylum system to ensure better, more durable protection and assistance for refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and persons who were, or who were at risk of becoming, stateless. The principal challenges in that area were the comprehensive implementation of the Act on Asylum and Refugee Protection, the digitization of refugee identity documents, the approval of a national strategy for local integration, sustained support for measures designed to eradicate statelessness and the establishment of a strategic partnership framework with humanitarian and development agencies. In tackling those challenges, Guinea required technical and financial support from its partners, including UNHCR.

103. **Ms. Yazgan** (Türkiye) said that, according to data from UNHCR, the number of refugees and persons in need of international protection globally had doubled to more than 122 million in the previous 10 years, while between 2018 and 2024 the funds made available to UNHCR had dropped by approximately 25 per cent. Irregular migration routes were exploited for profit by criminal networks as a consequence of painstakingly slow resettlement processes. Conflict, which was the main cause of forced displacement, had intensified and spread geographically. Refugee camps and United Nations staff in Gaza were being targeted in cold blood by the Government of Israel, betraying the standards and values that people all over the world had believed were upheld by the United Nations and by UNHCR. Double standards were applied to conflict resolution, and not all victims were equal. Global diplomacy was losing its credibility, and yet solutions, however limited, could be found only through diplomacy. As the High Commissioner had stated the previous day, future generations of refugees deserved better than cynicism and isolation.

104. Türkiye was host to 3.1 million persons requiring temporary protection, including more than 1 million Syrian children who had been born in the country during the previous 13 years. Syrian nationals had been provided with healthcare at walk-in centres on more than 100 million occasions. Around 60,000 Syrian students were enrolled in Turkish universities, including Jin Davod, one of the winners of the 2024 UNHCR Nansen Refugee Awards.

105. Türkiye continued to face serious challenges, including the underfunding of humanitarian assistance in north-western Syria, to which more than 700,000 people had returned voluntarily. The escalation of conflict in the Middle East, accompanied by rampant disregard for international law, heightened the risk of further forced displacement, while the increase in xenophobic and Islamophobic discourse in countries where populist politicians put their short-term interests ahead of the fundamental principles of the rules-based world order, to which their own nations owed their wealth and comfort, remained a real concern.

106. Against that gloomy backdrop, and with the knowledge that there was no alternative platform for collective efforts, Türkiye supported the work of the High Commissioner in delivering an inclusive, transparent, predictable and well-coordinated response. Her Government remained committed to working with partners to address the immense structural, political and systemic issues that were hampering collective international credibility.

107. **Mr. Bitok** (Kenya) said that violent conflict was on the rise, and peace and stability were being undermined in many parts of the world, causing human suffering to surge and ever greater numbers of people to flee. Kenya maintained an open-door policy and had put in place measures to ensure that refugees' basic needs were met, including through the adoption of the Refugee Act and the Refugees (General) Regulations. To consolidate and enhance many aspects of social and economic integration, the Government had established

the Shirika Plan, under which boards would be set up in Kakuma and Dadaab municipalities to facilitate the transfer of large numbers of refugees out of camps and into communities using a collaborative, multifaceted approach. Her delegation called on UNHCR and development partners for support in the implementation of the Plan.

108. Despite the progress it had made, Kenya continued to face challenges that included a protracted refugee situation coupled with a continuous influx of persons, stretching resources at reception centres, environmental degradation and climate change and the activities of human traffickers and smugglers. The quest for durable solutions to address the root causes of displacement, including violent conflict, remained of paramount concern. His delegation requested the High Commissioner to amplify the call for peace as the core foundation in preventing humanitarian crises. Third-country resettlement and voluntary repatriation programmes needed to be stepped up; commitments in that area should be backed up by tangible action. With regard to the sustainable programming approach, it was important to be clear on what sustainability entailed for refugees, host countries, countries of origin and donors.

109. At the Global Refugee Forum, Kenya had made numerous national and multi-stakeholder pledges. It was concerned that few of the pledges made at the Forum had been matched by pledges in support of host countries. His delegation urged partners to join matching efforts to address the gap between humanitarian needs and available resources and ensure that no crisis was forgotten. Kenya had achieved important milestones in addressing statelessness and would join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

110. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he recognized the migration challenges facing Panama by virtue of its geographical location and wished to congratulate the country on its efforts to protect women. He welcomed the emphasis that Honduras placed on human rights and vulnerable groups in its migration-related response. He hoped that the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework would prove useful in addressing internal displacement and mixed movements.

111. He wished to clarify that the drop in funds referred to by the delegation of Türkiye related specifically to operations in that country; in fact, in recent years, UNHCR as a whole had seen an increase in funding. Regrettably, that increase had not matched the speed at which the numbers of refugees had risen, and a reduction in flexibility meant that UNHCR was unable to cover all regions in an equitable manner. He appreciated the support of Türkiye in his appeal to prioritize diplomacy over force in attempts to address conflict.

112. He recognized the long tradition of hospitality that Pakistan had extended to Afghan refugees. The sporting achievements of some such refugees was a good example of how an inclusive approach could help to prepare people for positive, sustainable return to their home country. The delegation of Pakistan had made a very pertinent point in stating that protracted situations should not be forgotten.

113. He was grateful to Chad for its open-door policy and remained committed to supporting the country in managing the huge refugee burden it carried and mobilizing humanitarian and development resources. He fully supported the call made by the delegation of Chad for greater, and more serious, efforts to achieve peace in the Sudan.

114. He greatly appreciated the emphasis placed by Liberia on solutions, including those it had found for refugees from Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. It was encouraging to note that, through political efforts and regional cooperation, the plight of Liberian refugees was no longer the subject of discussions in the Executive Committee. He also welcomed the efforts of Guinea in that regard, and wished to congratulate the country on the good practices outlined by its delegation.

115. Investment in Nigeria was vital in meeting the challenges of both internal displacement in the country and the return of Nigerian nationals who were refugees in neighbouring countries. Further to the very positive policies in place in the country, UNHCR was working with the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement on the possibility of mobilizing private sector funding to address internal displacement. He wished

to recognize and encourage international support for the efforts made to step up inclusion in Zambia, which was a champion of that approach.

116. He wished to reiterate the support of UNHCR for the efforts of Burundi to reintegrate Burundian refugee returnees, especially those returning to the country from the United Republic of Tanzania. It was also important to help Burundi to continue to extend its long-standing hospitality as a host country to refugees, in particular from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Greater commitment from donors was required to ensure that those efforts were sustainable.

117. He was encouraged by the reference made by the delegation of Ethiopia to the need for self-reliance and sustainable aid and welcomed the country's role as a champion and interlocutor in those areas. Donors should take note of statements made about inclusion by States like Ethiopia, which had been hosting large numbers of refugees over long periods of time and deserved support.

118. Kenya remained a shining example of inclusion and a good blueprint for solutions. UNHCR supported the early roll-out of the Shirika Plan, which had the potential to mobilize considerable resources. He also commended Kenya on its commitment to the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.