



# General Assembly

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

### Summary record of the 768th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 16 October 2024, at 10 a.m.

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

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*In the absence of Ms. Stasch (Germany), Ms. Gorely (Australia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.  
The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

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

1. **Mr. Szijjártó** (Hungary) said that the international community lived in an age of danger: there was an increasing number of wars and armed conflicts in the world; the fear of terror was growing; extremist ideologies were spreading; and, as a result, more and more people were forced to leave their homes. More than 120 million people were living as refugees. Therefore, there was a need, first, to enhance the capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to ensure it was able to properly care for refugees and, second, to strengthen respect for international law to prevent further illegal mass migration and avoid endangering the security and stability of countries. Hungary was ready to take on its fair share of responsibility in both respects.

2. His Government would continue to provide the Office's Regional Representation for Central Europe and Global Service Centre with the necessary support so that it could continue to operate successfully. It was also working with the High Commissioner for Refugees during its presidency of the European Union to tackle the issue of statelessness.

3. A clear distinction must be drawn between refugees and migrants. Unfortunately, the term "refugee" was often misused. International law provided that persons forced to leave their homes were entitled to stay temporarily on the territory of the first safe country. However, it did not recognize the right to stay in the territory of a second, third or, indeed, tenth safe country. Therefore, violating the border between two safe countries could not be considered as a human rights issue.

4. Hungary, which was under pressure from both migrants and refugees, had spent more than €2 billion in recent years to address the situation. It had received 1.4 million refugees as a result of the nearly thousand-day war in neighbouring Ukraine. It afforded them the same access to education and healthcare as Hungarian citizens. Hungary had been carrying out the largest humanitarian operation in its history. At the same time, it was protecting the external border of the European Union along its southern border on the continent's busiest route and had stopped half a million illegal migrants in the previous three and a half years. Those who violated its border had shown no respect for its laws and regulations and had been attacking Hungarian police officers and border guards.

5. Hungary would continue to protect its borders and defend its sovereignty. It would also continue to provide all necessary assistance to refugees arriving from Ukraine for as long as necessary. It supported international initiatives aimed at establishing peace in Ukraine, as that was the only way of saving lives, ending the suffering of families in Ukraine, and stopping people from being forced to leave their homes and thus becoming refugees.

6. **Mr. Duszczyk** (Poland) said that the scale of displacement was increasing, yet the collective efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts remained insufficient in the face of ongoing humanitarian emergencies. A comprehensive and durable strategy was needed to address the situation.

7. Poland had been at the forefront of the humanitarian response to the crisis caused by the brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian regime, with the support of Belarus. The invasion had not only threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine but had also caused unprecedented massive suffering that extended far beyond Ukrainian borders. Poland was also a testament to the power of compassion, solidarity and action. Since February 2022, it had opened its doors to millions of Ukrainian refugees and had provided them not only with shelter and aid but also the chance to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Ukrainians had the same access to social services, education and professional development as Polish citizens.

8. The importance of the international community's response to that tragedy could not be overstated. The European Union decision to apply for the first time, immediately in the wake of the invasion, Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between member States in receiving such persons

and bearing the consequences thereof (the Temporary Protection Directive) had provided over 6 million Ukrainians with the legal protection and support they so urgently needed.

9. Aiding Ukrainian refugees was not only a humanitarian act; it was also a resolute condemnation of Russian aggression. Ukrainians continued to defend their country, spilling their blood for their right to freedom and self-determination. As winter approached in Ukraine, the international community must be firm and resolute. The coming months could bring freezing temperatures and more missile strikes. The targeting of critical infrastructure, private houses and apartments, hospitals and kindergartens put thousands of lives at risk. The international community must stand ready to provide immediate help and rebuild and reinforce Ukrainian energy infrastructure. It could not allow innocent civilians to freeze. Poland stood firmly by Ukraine and was making the necessary preparations for a potential new influx of war refugees.

10. The situation in the Middle East was escalating and demanded the international community's immediate attention. It must continue to provide the necessary assistance to all regions affected by conflict. Poland had changed from being a nation of emigrants to one that received large number of immigrants and refugees. It had learned how difficult it was to balance national interests with international and humanitarian obligations. Its support had extended far beyond its borders, as it had channelled its resources into reducing the suffering caused by conflicts and crises in Syria, the Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Armenia and beyond. Poland stood firmly in solidarity with those in need.

11. Poland applauded the courage and dedication of all UNHCR humanitarian workers, who risked their lives daily to alleviate human suffering globally. Their work was now more critical than ever.

12. **Ms. Pastore** (Latvia) said that her delegation shared the High Commissioner's concerns over the unprecedented displacement resulting from conflicts, violence, persecution and climate emergencies. The war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine, armed conflicts in the Sudan and Syria, humanitarian emergencies in Gaza and Lebanon, instability in Afghanistan and other humanitarian crises had resulted in millions fleeing their homes. Her delegation called on all to comply with international humanitarian law to ensure the safety and dignity of people affected by conflicts.

13. Given the increasingly complex nature of displacement, it fully supported the Office's whole-of-route approach, which was also relevant to the new pact on migration and asylum at European Union level. Latvia was committed to the timely implementation of the new pact. It continued to provide temporary protection to the people of Ukraine, who had been forced to flee their country due to the war of aggression of Russia. To date, around 45,000 Ukrainian refugees were registered in Latvia, including thousands of children. Latvia would continue to support Ukrainians for as long as necessary, providing them with housing, education, jobs, healthcare and social care.

14. In the light of the continuous attacks of Russia against the energy infrastructure of Ukraine, the international community must put all its efforts into helping people survive the harsh winter. Therefore, Latvia welcomed the Office's Ukraine winter response plan and was proud to contribute to it. For the sake of the people of Ukraine and the global community, the illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war waged by Russia must stop.

15. While supporting the refugees forced to leave their homes, Latvia also secured the European Union external border. The ongoing exploitation of migrants by Russia and Belarus for political ends by creating artificial migration routes and pushing people across borders was yet another attempt of the Belarusian and Russian regimes to threaten the stability, sovereignty and national security of Latvia and other European Union member States. Her delegation condemned in the strongest possible terms such exploitation. Lastly, Latvia once again commended UNHCR for its tireless efforts and would continue cooperating with the High Commissioner in addressing current challenges.

16. **Mr. Bonnafont** (France) said that he wished to express his country's admiration and support for the Office and the personnel who served it and its sense of indebtedness towards those who should never have lost their lives in the line of duty. The current situation was appalling. Lebanon, which itself hosted nearly a million refugees, was in turn becoming a

land of displacement. The Lebanese tragedy had come on top of those in Gaza, Ukraine, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and dozens of other crises that were mobilizing humanitarian actors to serve the most vulnerable.

17. France would continue to resolutely support Ukraine, where Russia must put an end to the illegal war of aggression it had been waging since February 2022. France and many of its partners called for an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Lebanon to prevent further military escalation in the region and pave the way for a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon must be restored. In Gaza, it was urgent for the parties to agree to a ceasefire and do everything possible to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, starting with the release of the hostages. In Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank, Ukraine, the Sudan, Burma and many other theatres of conflict, civilians were the first victims.

18. France was firmly committed to the Global Compact on Refugees. The Government's implementation of inclusive reception policies for refugees, including the teaching of French, access to housing and education and vocational training, exemplified its commitment to the principle of solidarity. It was concerned first and foremost about the well-being of women and girls, who were disproportionately affected by disasters and conflicts, in particular Afghan women and girls. Through the "Avec Elles" ("With Them") initiative launched at the second Global Refugee Forum, held in 2023, France and dozens of other States had made a commitment to resettling particularly vulnerable women and refugees in their countries.

19. The Olympic achievements of the refugee delegation that summer in Paris and the laurels awarded to them at the Olympic Games had sent a message of hope to millions of displaced persons and refugees around the world. His delegation recognized the efforts of Armenia, Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Türkiye and many others who received and offered protection to refugees.

20. France had increased its voluntary contributions to UNHCR in recent years. It would continue to give the humanitarian system the means to respond effectively to emergencies. Diversification was imperative, however, if that system was to be financed in the long term. There was a need for new actors. There was also a need to consider the respective roles of humanitarian work, which focused on emergencies, and development work, which must take over at certain times. France would continue to engage in such discussions with the Office and wished to reaffirm its full support for its committed and often heroic work.

21. **Mr. Gómez Martínez** (Spain) said that his delegation must acknowledge once again in 2024 the sacrifice of humanitarian workers, including those of UNHCR, who had lost their lives. Neither United Nations staff nor peacekeepers were military targets under international humanitarian law. Spain demanded that attacks on them cease.

22. Spain currently had the second highest number of asylum applications among the countries of the European Union. Faced with that reality, Spanish society had once again demonstrated its most caring side. As the High Commissioner had pointed out, España con ACNUR (Spain with UNHCR) had been the most important source of private funds for UNHCR in 2023. For its part, the Government, in accordance with the Spanish Strategy for Humanitarian Diplomacy, had continued to take a human-rights approach to international protection, strengthening the country's reception arrangements for international protection and humanitarian assistance. Its humanitarian diplomacy addressed the root causes of conflict and took a comprehensive approach to mixed movements.

23. It was proud to have facilitated the adoption of the historic new pact on migration and asylum, which would strengthen the capacity of the European Union to manage mixed movements effectively while ensuring the protection of human rights, including those of stateless persons. It appreciated the valuable work of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement and the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. His delegation agreed with the High Commissioner on the need to ensure the sustainability of the Office's actions, which could be achieved by promoting the self-reliance of refugees through inclusion measures that guaranteed their economic and social contribution and by supporting host communities and thus strengthening their resilience. For this reason, Spain also supported the whole-of-route approach mentioned by the

High Commissioner, as decades of experience had shown that managing flows of people – whether migrants or refugees – from the border did not provide a durable solution.

24. Spain also advocated gender mainstreaming in all actions carried out in the area of international protection. A significant share of the new shelters that the Government would open would be for single women, women with dependent children and victims of gender-based violence against women and trafficking in persons. It was also promoting digital connectivity for refugees, with a special emphasis on refugee and forcibly displaced children, and the Giga initiative to connect every school to the Internet. In addition, it welcomed the Office's strategic framework for gender equity, diversity and inclusion in staffing with a view to fostering a more inclusive environment for all.

25. The Government would continue to strengthen its reception system to include refugees in Spain, as the most effective way to help them rebuild their lives and contribute to the country where they had decided to reach safety. It would continue to uphold its commitment to first reception countries, to UNHCR and to the institution of international protection, to ensure that no one was left behind.

26. **Ms. Filipenko** (Ukraine) said that Ukraine was proud to join the Executive Committee and was committed to playing its part in strengthening international protection and supporting the Office's mission. 2024 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the work of UNHCR in Ukraine. Her delegation was grateful to the High Commissioner and UNHCR for all the assistance and support provided to Ukraine, particularly in the current trying times of war, and looked forward to continued partnership.

27. With the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in its third year, the large-scale humanitarian and displacement crisis it provoked had become increasingly protracted. More than 11 million Ukrainians remained displaced, including about 4.7 million within Ukraine and a further 6.7 million who had been seeking safety abroad. The humanitarian outlook had worsened recently with the systematic attacks of Russia on critical infrastructure. In full contempt of international humanitarian law, Russia had deliberately destroyed at least half of the power system of Ukraine, disrupting access to electricity, heating, water and sanitation for millions of people.

28. Ukraine welcomed the High Commissioner's visit to Ukraine in July 2024 and the preparation of the UNHCR winter response plan. As Ukraine braced for its third winter of war, it called upon all partners to continue supporting UNHCR life-saving assistance and protection activities in Ukraine. Ukraine also welcomed the recent decision of the European Union to extend until March 2026 the temporary protection for more than 4 million Ukrainians who had fled the war waged by Russia. The continued hospitality and solidarity shown in the Union member countries and other host countries towards displaced Ukrainians was much appreciated. For its part, Ukraine would continue to foster an enabling socioeconomic environment for the safe and voluntary return of all Ukrainians temporarily displaced abroad.

29. Ukraine acknowledged the progress made towards ending statelessness in the world since the launch of the I Belong campaign. It had recently strengthened its legislative and policy frameworks, which had led to enhanced protection for stateless persons. The establishment of a statelessness determination procedure had helped identify some 1,100 stateless persons in the country. Her delegation emphasized the need for renewed action to address statelessness in the world and welcomed the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. Ukraine supported its vision and mission of the Alliance and would be considering joining it.

30. Alarmingly, the international community's collective efforts to realize a world where no one was denied nationality were undermined by the harmful policies and practices of Russia in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine aimed at destroying Ukrainians as a national group. As confirmed by the Human Rights Committee, the automatic imposition of Russian citizenship on citizens of Ukraine in the occupied Crimea constituted discrimination on the grounds of national origin. Moreover, in violation of its obligations as the occupying Power, the Russian Federation continued to pursue its shameless campaign of imposing Russian citizenship in the occupied parts of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Provinces of Ukraine.

31. Residents without Russian passports had increasingly experienced pressure and discrimination in the enjoyment of their rights to employment and social security, property rights and freedom of movement and in their access to healthcare and public services. Her delegation was deeply disturbed by the malicious intention of Russia to declare Ukrainians refusing to obtain Russian passports “foreigners” or stateless persons after 31 December 2024 and to subject them to deportation. It resolutely condemned the forced imposition of the Russian citizenship in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The unlawful decisions and actions of Russia would have no legal consequences for the citizens of Ukraine living under occupation. Lastly, Ukraine reaffirmed its strong support for the vital work of UNHCR to address the protection and assistance needs of vulnerable displaced persons worldwide.

32. **Mr. Gallón** (Colombia) said that his delegation expressed its condolences for the recent loss of life of UNHCR staff and reiterated the urgent need for dialogue between Israel and Palestine in order to achieve peaceful coexistence. Colombia was a country affected by armed conflict, where peace remained a major challenge. His Government, together with Egypt and Norway, had therefore led a pledge on peacebuilding and conflict prevention at the second Global Refugee Forum. Colombia had highlighted at the Summit of the Future the complementary nature of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Pact for the Future. His delegation would also like to highlight the commitment of Colombia to children and its efforts to find alternatives to the detention of migrants, in collaboration with UNHCR, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Detention Coalition.

33. In the previous five years, Colombia had received more than 4 million people, some with the intention of staying in the country and others who were in transit. In no case had Colombia used detention and it made every effort to ensure the protection of children, for, as it had pointed out at the recent session of the Human Rights Council, there was no humane way to detain children or to separate children from their parents.

34. Since the arrival of UNHCR in Colombia in 1997, the Office had been committed to the protection of displaced persons in the country, who currently numbered more than 8 million. Colombia was grateful to UNHCR for supporting government efforts to assist the nearly 3 million migrants in the country, with nearly 2 million already regularized. It had provided special permits for guardians of Venezuelan minors. It ensured genuine integration through a regularization process that allowed access to financial and social services.

35. Colombia had proudly assumed the chair of the mechanism for the implementation of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. His delegation wished to highlight the part played by UNHCR in the tripartite meeting with Panama and the United States of America to respond to the challenges in the Darién region, at which agreement had been reached on strengthening the State presence of Colombia and Panama on the border. His delegation would also like to welcome the series of activities to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees as part of the Cartagena+40 process, under the leadership of Chile, which sought to strengthen national refugee protection systems while coming up with a comprehensive humanitarian response to migration issues in the Latin American and Caribbean region, with an emphasis on human rights and solidarity.

36. Colombia took a differentiated approach to Indigenous Peoples and communities, gender and children. It welcomed the progress made by the I Belong campaign and the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, and the launch of the Americas Network on Nationality and Statelessness. Much had been accomplished and much remained to be done.

37. **Mr. Oike** (Japan) said that the international community faced an unprecedented scale of humanitarian crises and tragic levels of forced displacement, exacerbated in recent years by conflict and climate change. Japan was deeply concerned by the growing disregard for international humanitarian law. States must view each other’s individual suffering from the perspective of leaving no one behind.

38. It was unrealistic to rely solely on humanitarian assistance to address the current multiple crises. In the face of multifaceted challenges, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus was more significant than ever. That nexus created opportunities for non-humanitarian

entities to assist refugees from the outset of crises. By establishing such a triple nexus platform with the United Nations Development Programme, Japan aimed to promote a whole-of-society approach, inviting diverse stakeholders that included multilateral development banks, bilateral development institutions, private companies and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to leverage their strength.

39. He wished to draw particular attention to the proposal of the High Commissioner on sustainable support, which Japan welcomed and viewed as a means of making the triple nexus a reality. For example, providing opportunities for education and vocational training was essential to increasing the self-reliance of refugees, as called for in the Global Compact on Refugees. While inclusion depended on the local context, UNHCR could act as a catalyst in mobilizing development partners. In addition, development cooperation in countries of origin could foster an enabling environment for the refugees' return. An example of such cooperation was the humanitarian demining efforts in Ukraine.

40. Effective implementation of sustainable support was crucial. However, conditions on the ground varied significantly from one crisis to another. Development assistance should take the form of additional funding that benefited both refugees and host communities from the perspective of burden- and responsibility-sharing. In addition, initiatives like disaster risk reduction and early warning systems could help mitigate future crises. Climate change could be a root cause of displacement and a risk factor for conflict.

41. As a co-convener of the second Global Refugee Forum and leader of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative, Japan was dedicated to achieving tangible results by the time of the meeting of high-level officials in 2025. His delegation wished to commend UNHCR on its leadership in addressing statelessness. The Government had recently initiated a digital birth registration project in post-conflict areas of the Philippines. Japan remained committed to ending statelessness and would give consideration to its approach to the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

42. **Mr. Petersen** (Denmark) said that the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine, the catastrophic situation in Gaza, the emergencies in Lebanon and the Sudan and other new and long-standing conflicts, along with the impact of climate change, had led to yet another year of record levels of forced displacement. He wished to thank the High Commissioner for highlighting the need for rights-based, comprehensive approaches to address the complexities of mixed movements and for Office's commitment to strengthen its partnership with IOM and the wider United Nations system on that issue.

43. Strengthening of both the asylum and migration management system was essential to ensure that the protection needs of both refugees and migrants were met while ensuring an effective and sustainable return of those without the legal right to stay. His Government's ambition was to find new European Union solutions to address irregular migration towards Europe as a supplement to the new pact on migration and asylum. Denmark, along with 14 other States members of the Union had sent a letter to the European Commission outlining a vision of next steps on the migration agenda. Comprehensive partnership with the countries along the routes were key in the search for new solutions to address irregular migration.

44. UNHCR remained a key partner of Denmark. The Government was proud to be among the top donors and that the majority of its funding was multi-year, unearmarked and flexible, allowing UNHCR to prioritize funding where the needs were greatest.

45. While humanitarian needs worldwide were higher than ever, funding fell far short of needs. It was therefore necessary to continue efforts to move away from the humanitarian service delivery model towards more sustainable approaches to strengthen self-reliance and inclusive access to core services. That involved lasting benefits for both host communities and refugees within national development processes and with the required international support, which was very much in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. Through partnerships with countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Jordan and with the World Bank, UNHCR and many others, his Government had been investing in precisely that and much progress has been achieved. Therefore, it strongly supported the enhanced strategic focus of UNHCR on sustainable approaches.

46. Denmark welcomed the new Global Alliance to End Statelessness, which it would be joining. Human rights must be at the centre of all international efforts. His delegation appreciated the Office's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. The age, gender and diversity approach was the key to providing a truly inclusive and sustainable refugee response. His delegation wished to express its gratitude to all UNHCR staff for its tireless work around the world.

47. **Mr. Balestrero** (Holy See) said that the devastating conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine and other humanitarian emergencies, conflicts and natural disasters had displaced millions of people. His delegation remained concerned about the number of deaths occurring along the Atlantic route, the continuing plight of the Rohingya refugees and the increasing number of persons attempting to cross the Darién Gap, including unaccompanied minors. Against that background, the Holy See wished to express its gratitude to those countries that had opened their borders to refugees, despite the challenges and hardship often experienced by their own populations, and to those who worked to combat trafficking in human beings and other practices that were contrary to human dignity.

48. However, host communities must not be left to fend for themselves. Collective and concerted efforts were needed. International cooperation should not be limited to financial assistance, which was all too often inadequate; rather it must include greater commitments to resettlement and complementary pathways for refugees. Refugees who were granted access to just and fair employment opportunities could become agents of development and enrich their host communities. Access to education enabled refugee children to live dignified lives.

49. The route-based approach proposed by the High Commissioner was especially pertinent in the context of mixed movements. Along migration routes, a large network of local Catholic institutions was committed to welcoming, protecting and integrating refugees without distinction. While attention was rightly paid to persons who had fled their countries of origin owing to a credible fear of persecution, grave harm, or death, the needs of internally displaced persons also needed to be addressed. Persons who had decided to return home voluntarily also required support.

50. His delegation commended UNHCR on its efforts to address statelessness, which continued to affect millions of people, and encouraged States to undertake legal and policy reforms to prevent and reduce that phenomenon.

51. Regrettably, several documents, policies and programmes developed by UNHCR without prior consultation with all States included non-consensual language and concepts that had no agreed definition under international law. Those same concepts had subsequently been included in other documents, including the UNHCR budget programme, which had been submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. His delegation remained concerned about that practice, which distorted the debate among States and was intended to impose a unilateral interpretation of certain concepts, such as "gender" and "diversity". His delegation wished to place on record its disagreement and to dissociate itself from such interpretation and practice.

52. **Mr. Foradori** (Argentina) said that forced displacement and mixed movements driven by violence, insecurity, inequality and lack of opportunity had become an all-too-common occurrence in the Americas. The countries of the region had a long history of opening their doors to displaced persons. However, the magnitude of the challenges that the region was facing necessitated a more decisive response at the global level. His delegation called on the international community to help bridge the significant gap between the funding currently available and the resources required for UNHCR and host communities to continue to provide the critical services needed in the countries of the region.

53. Burden-sharing must be more equitable, predictable and sustainable. As the Office itself had noted, as at mid-2024, the region was hosting 20 million forcibly displaced persons and others in need of protection and assistance, including nearly 6 million refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing oppression and a lack of freedom. Unlike countries that used the principle of non-interference in internal affairs as a pretext to avoid the scrutiny of the international community – a principle embraced mainly by dictatorships actively involved in the expulsion of migrants – Argentina advocated the principle of non-indifference between



States as a means of addressing the root causes of displacement and responding to the serious human rights situation in the region and the humanitarian consequences flowing from it.

54. Argentina, which, as at August 2024, was hosting more than 172,000 asylum-seeking refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, most of them from Venezuela, had introduced flexible mechanisms for the regularization of refugees' status, ensuring that they received the same treatment as citizens of Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries. To respond to large-scale displacement in the region, Argentina continued to operate its special humanitarian visa programme for nationals and residents of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean who had been displaced by disasters. Under the programme, humanitarian visas could be granted to those persons for a period of three years, after which they became eligible for permanent residence.

55. A system of community sponsorship was in operation: Argentine sponsors wishing to host displaced persons had to request permission for them to enter the country and to commit to provide them with board and lodging for one year.

56. In accordance with the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, every 10 years, the countries of the region held consultations to identify new humanitarian challenges and to propose effective responses to improve protection and solutions for refugees and displaced persons. Argentina was actively involved in the Cartagena+40 process.

57. The migration journey began with people fleeing economies run by populist leaders and the oppression of tyrants, dictators from the self-styled global South who believed they could consign the ideas of freedom to the electric chair and who looked askance at the global West, whose development had been brought about by the ideas of freedom. Many simply sought peace, an education for their children and economic stability. The international community should not remain indifferent to their desire to determine their own destiny or the painful lengths that they often went to in order to fulfil it.

58. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he wished to thank Japan for all the support that it provided to UNHCR. Its strong advocacy for sustainability in the Office's activities over the years was also appreciated, as was its leading role in efforts to develop the concept of human security and in the debate on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

59. Colombia, which had welcomed millions of persons in recent years, had excellent reception practices and a robust approach to inclusion. He hoped that the laws and practices mentioned by the Colombian delegation could be presented and discussed as part of the Cartagena+40 process, in particular at the upcoming event scheduled to take place in Chile in December 2024, and of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. UNHCR would continue to support those initiatives.

60. He was grateful to Argentina for continuing to receive and host persons fleeing violence and dictatorships, its participation in the Cartagena+40 process and its clear account of the challenges associated with complex, mixed movements in Latin America, which, in turn, called for complex responses. There could be no simple answers to such complex questions. The Office would continue to focus on addressing the root causes of such phenomenon.

61. He had visited Ukraine twice in 2024 and shared the concerns that it had raised regarding the situation in the country in the short term and the challenges posed by the prospect of a harsh winter. UNHCR would continue to monitor the situation and step up its winter response, as required. He agreed that it was necessary to have a strategic outlook on the future return of Ukrainian refugees to Ukraine. Several other delegations had referred to the situation in Ukraine and to the need to continue to support humanitarian operations in the country.

62. Poland had clearly explained the complex balance that had to be struck between national interests and security concerns, on the one hand, and the imperatives of solidarity and international legal obligations towards persons seeking refuge in other countries, on the other. UNHCR would continue to be a constructive interlocutor in that regard.

63. Latvia, for its part, had raised similar issues, including the very complex issue of manipulation of flows of people to put pressure on certain countries, which was a completely unacceptable practice. The challenge was finding a way to maintain the integrity of the asylum process, even in complex situations. He agreed that the implementation of the new pact on migration and asylum would serve to address many of the challenges facing countries in Europe.

64. Regarding the statement made by Hungary, he wished to recall that protecting borders and protecting refugees were not mutually exclusive. The challenge was finding a way of doing both simultaneously.

65. The Holy See was to be commended on its continued efforts to promote the rights and dignity of refugees and migrants and other persons on the move. The powerful advocacy of Pope Francis and the work carried out by Catholic institutions on the ground in support of those persons were highly valuable. He had taken note of the point raised by the delegation of the Holy See about the inclusion of non-consensual language and concepts in UNHCR documents. The Office had consulted as widely as possible and maintained that the content of its documents was fully in line with international law and positions taken by the United Nations.

66. France continued to be a strong supporter of the work of UNHCR, as evidenced by its increasing financial contributions over the years, and had drawn attention to a number of important initiatives, including the initiative to assist refugee women that had been launched during the Global Refugee Forum. The country's continued efforts to mobilize resources on behalf of UNHCR, especially for the emergencies in the Sudan and Lebanon, were much appreciated.

67. Spain had made timely mention of diplomacy for peace and UNHCR was counting on the country to play a leading role in assisting refugees and humanitarian workers who were victims of political crises and wars throughout the world. He was thankful for the robust financial support received from Spain, including its having pioneered multi-year and flexible contributions, and recognized the important role played by Spanish civil society in promoting the Office's work.

68. Denmark too had always been a strong advocate for sustainability in the Office's activities and, through its partnership with Kenya, had shown how the private sector could be involved in multi-party refugee responses.

69. Lastly, he wished to thank all the countries that had stated their intention to become part of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

70. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon) said that his delegation wished to pay tribute to UNHCR staff at headquarters and in the field and to convey its heartfelt condolences to the Office following the recent killing of two colleagues in Lebanon. As the global refugee crisis worsened, the international community needed to step up its efforts to find durable solutions while continuing to provide funding to UNHCR to enable it to fulfil its mandate of protecting refugees and their human dignity.

71. Wars waged with blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and its underlying principles were especially destructive. The disturbing images and footage emerging from Lebanon provided but a glimpse of the atrocities and war crimes being committed there with total impunity and the ensuing devastation and suffering. However, the reality on the ground was much worse, as confirmed by reports from official Lebanese sources, international organizations and NGOs present in the territory. More than 1.2 million people were facing forcible displacement from southern Lebanon, the Biqa' region and Beirut. Southern Lebanon had become largely uninhabitable as civilians were killed by heavy bombardments or forced to run for their lives, leaving behind everything they owned. That mass forced displacement involved Lebanese civilians and Syrian refugees alike. Many were destitute and forced to stay in poorly equipped shelters while others were forced to huddle in the street. Buildings sheltering displaced families were also being targeted by airstrikes.

72. A ceasefire seemed elusive. The already precarious humanitarian situation in the country could deteriorate further and put the Lebanese authorities under unbearable pressure. Ensuring humanitarian access was becoming increasingly difficult owing to the brutality of

the Israeli attacks, many of which targeted humanitarian and emergency workers and hospitals and medical centres.

73. The Israel Defense Forces were using the same tactics in Lebanon as they had used in Gaza. It was unfortunate that the international community remained powerless as international humanitarian law was being hollowed out in Gaza and Lebanon with total impunity. Failure to reach a ceasefire in the near future could seriously hamper the efforts of UNHCR in the region.

74. By rendering vast swathes of Lebanon uninhabitable, the occupying Power was effectively forestalling the return of the displaced population and placing in doubt the future of Lebanon as a nation. The international community must push back against the weaponization of the displacement occurring in Lebanon in violation of the Geneva Conventions or be prepared to witness more conflict, intolerance and radicalism in the Middle East.

75. UNHCR and other United Nations bodies must continue to mobilize the international community to avoid a complete meltdown. Support for refugees and host communities must be scaled up and UNHCR must continue to call for a ceasefire and an end to the bloodshed in Lebanon.

76. **Mr. White** (Ireland) said that his delegation wished to pay tribute to UNHCR staff, who worked in complex and often dangerous environments across the globe, and to offer its condolences following the recent killing of two UNHCR colleagues in Lebanon.

77. There must be an urgent de-escalation of the conflicts and an immediate ceasefire accompanied by a surge in humanitarian assistance in Lebanon and Gaza. In a year that was on course to be the deadliest on record for humanitarian workers, Ireland must reiterate the importance of respecting international humanitarian law. Destructive conflicts, climate emergencies and economic insecurity disproportionately affected the most vulnerable and those least to blame for such events. The conflicts in the Middle East, the Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere had led to mass displacement. His delegation was conscious of the burden assumed by the countries and communities hosting those forced to flee and reiterated its commitment to supporting them, bearing in mind the shared responsibility of States to protect refugees without discrimination.

78. UNHCR was to be commended for its efforts to protect all refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless persons, regardless of age, gender or background, including LGBTIQ+ persons. The specific challenges faced by women and girls remained a cause for concern and his delegation wished to highlight the need to ensure that survivors of gender-based violence continued to be accorded priority in UNHCR responses.

79. At the second Global Refugee Forum, Ireland had made a number of pledges relating to core funding, climate action, food security, peacebuilding, resettlement, integration and safe and legal migration pathways, and remained committed to achieving the aims of the Global Compact on Refugees.

80. As recalled by the High Commissioner, strengthening the sustainability of humanitarian responses required States to work closely with local organizations. The challenge was moving from simply financial or contractual relationships to more equal and meaningful partnerships. Working in partnership with local actors would only strengthen the key protection mandate of UNHCR and its ability to reach those most in need.

81. The impact of climate change and the fact that climate-induced migration was there to stay could not be ignored. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030 and the setting up of the Climate Resilience Fund. Ireland had recently announced its largest budget allocation for overseas development aid to date, including a significant increase in its climate-related contributions. His delegation recognized the growing humanitarian funding gap and appreciated the role played by UNHCR in ensuring that both protracted and forgotten crises did not disappear from the international humanitarian agenda.

82. The Office's move towards sustainable programming and multi-year budgeting was a welcome development. His delegation hoped that dependency on aid in protracted

displacement situations could be reduced without prejudice to the Office's core mandate to provide protection and humanitarian assistance. Since 2023, Ireland had been providing its core funding to UNHCR under a multi-year agreement to ensure predictability and flexibility and to assist the Office's longer-term planning. His delegation encouraged donors to consider providing funding over a longer term. In 2024, Ireland had provided humanitarian funding to support specific UNHCR responses in Jordan, Pakistan, Venezuela, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, the Sudan and Lebanon.

83. **Mr. Omar** (Yemen) said that, regrettably, the High Commissioner had not mentioned Yemen in his opening statement, which, he hoped, did not mean that UNHCR had left displaced persons in Yemen to their fate. While it was widely held that the war in Yemen, which had been sparked by a Houthi-led coup, had ended following the signing of an unofficial truce, the fact was that Iranian-made Houthi missiles and drones were still targeting economic facilities and oil and gas export posts, thus depriving the Government of 70 per cent of its revenue. A decade had passed since the beginning of the war. The economic situation in Yemen was catastrophic and a humanitarian crisis was raging, as 88 per cent of the population were living below the extreme poverty line and were completely dependent on humanitarian aid. While the situation in Yemen was bleak, the wider region, too, was dogged by tragedy, as the indiscriminate Israeli war machine was killing Palestinians and Lebanese with impunity thanks to military and political support from certain superpowers.

84. The annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the General Assembly (A/79/12) had indicated that Yemen was one of the countries with the highest number of internally displaced persons – some 5 million, of whom nearly 3 million lived in areas controlled by the legitimate Government. The mass displacement in the country was attributable to the actions of Houthi insurgents, who had committed human rights violations, confiscated humanitarian aid, arbitrarily detained humanitarian workers and staff of international organizations and restricted access to aid for those in need. The Government of Yemen regretted the Office's recent decision to scale back its support for displaced persons in the country, which would only worsen their plight. His delegation called on UNHCR to reconsider its decision.

85. A new wave of forced displacement had been caused by climate change and severe weather events. More than 100,000 families had been forced to move after floods had swept away their homes and livelihoods. Host communities were struggling to cope with the additional burden.

86. The Government, with the help of the international community, was working to address the problem of internal displacement. However, it was facing several challenges, notably a lack of funding. The Government supported the Office's strategy of moving away from emergency responses towards durable solutions and sustainable projects. It was working to lay the groundwork for such solutions and, to that end, had conducted a study on returnees and their needs, which showed that 2.2 million persons living in areas controlled by the legitimate Government had not received any support or assistance and had returned to areas destroyed during the war.

87. His delegation again called on all friendly countries and international donor organizations to support the 2024 humanitarian response plan for Yemen and urged UNHCR and the international community to keep the humanitarian situation in Yemen on its list of priorities and to fulfil their obligations towards countries hosting refugees by sharing the associated burden, finding durable solutions and providing more financial and humanitarian resources to assist developing countries. Industrialized countries that exported weapons and were the largest polluters must take responsibility, close the funding gap and provide generous support to UNHCR and developing countries, which continued to bear the brunt of displacement.

88. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia) said that his delegation wished to express its appreciation for the tireless work carried out by UNHCR teams in the field, which was often conducted in challenging and even life-threatening conditions. His delegation shared the High Commissioner's concerns about the unprecedented scale of displacement resulting from an increasing number of humanitarian emergencies. Equally worrying was the complexity of displacement, which often involved mixed movements. The response to that phenomenon

must be holistic and comprehensive and focus on those in need of international protection. The Office's commitment to apply a whole-of-route approach and its work on new, innovative and humane approaches to asylum, such as regional processing, were much appreciated, as was its readiness to work in close partnership with both States and other international organizations, such as IOM.

89. The unprovoked and unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine had been going on for more than two years. Czechia had provided refuge to more than 600,000 Ukrainians, who were mostly women and children. Concerted action and the solidarity shown by civil society had made it possible to assist Ukrainian refugees quickly and effectively. While most Ukrainian refugees were now integrated into Czech society, their hope was still to return home once the situation allowed.

90. Over the last decade, Czechia had provided some €25 million in funding to support the work of UNHCR in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In 2024, the Government had donated €3 million to support UNHCR operations in Afghanistan, Mauritania and Rwanda. Further funding to support Lebanese and Syrian refugees had recently been approved in response to the flash appeals launched by the United Nations. His delegation was mindful that, despite the efforts of many donors, UNHCR continued to face a critical funding gap. It therefore welcomed the Office's efforts in the areas of prioritization, sustainable programming, the triple nexus, increased collaboration with local partners and effective coordination across the United Nations system.

91. **Mr. Manley** (United Kingdom) said that he wished to pay tribute to those humanitarian workers who had lost their lives in the past year, not least the UNHCR colleagues who had died in the course of their duties in Lebanon.

92. His delegation was deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Middle East. All parties had an obligation to comply with international humanitarian law and ensure protection for civilians and infrastructure. His Government was clear in its view that the fighting must stop, the hostages must be freed and there must be safe and free humanitarian access to those in need.

93. In the face of increasing global displacement, his Government would work with UNHCR to respond to the growing list of protracted and emerging crises. Its commitment to multilateral solutions was clear and deep-rooted. However, it was clear international attention also needed to be paid to the situation in countries of origin in order to address root causes and invest in anticipatory action to build resilience and independence and in particular to empower women and girls. UNHCR must continue to provide protection for the most vulnerable, but more predictable and sustainable support was needed if increasingly stretched resources were to be used more efficiently.

94. He wished to acknowledge the leadership and generosity of host countries. The United Kingdom was committed to working together to seek durable solutions. As his delegation had said at the second Global Refugee Forum, it was necessary to look beyond traditional humanitarian partnerships in order to galvanize joint sustainable action in response to the needs of displaced people.

95. Against the backdrop of the brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia, in flagrant breach of the Charter of the United Nations, the United Kingdom was providing £100 million in humanitarian assistance in the current year. He paid tribute to the British people, who had offered sanctuary to some 300,000 Ukrainians, and to the people of Ukraine, for the sacrifice that they were making for their freedom and the world's security.

96. He was grateful to the Assistant High Commissioner for speaking out so clearly about the scale and horror of the conflict in the Sudan, the world's most severe humanitarian crisis, affecting some 25 million people, and about the burden being borne by neighbouring countries. The United Kingdom had provided almost £100 million in assistance to the Sudan in 2024.

97. The United Kingdom was grateful to UNHCR for its leadership of the I Belong campaign to end statelessness. He reiterated his gratitude to all the Office's staff for their tireless assistance to those in need in difficult and dangerous circumstances.

98. **Mr. Meron** (Israel) said that his delegation continued to support the age-gender-diversity approach, which was key to equitable and fair access to human rights for persons in situations of migration or displacement. He highlighted the work done by Israeli civil society in combating sexual and gender-based violence in conflict in South Sudan and to re-establish access to education for children affected by violence in refugee camps in Kenya.

99. In the year since the terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas, there had been consistent rocket attacks on Israel by the terrorist groups Hamas and Hizbullah, as well as other hostile actors in the region such as the Houthis from Yemen. In that time, more than 20,000 rockets had been fired indiscriminately at Israel, while Hizbullah had fired more than 13,000 projectiles, 1,500 anti-tank missiles and hundreds of explosive drones at Israel. More than 60 Israelis, including children, had been killed, and hundreds injured, by rockets fired by Hizbullah; Hamas and Hizbullah attacks had resulted in the displacement of up to 250,000 Israelis from their homes. Those people deserved better than to be continuously cast aside by the United Nations. Israel and Israeli civil society were making efforts to help by offering temporary housing and other assistance to meet the basic needs of the most marginalized and affected communities, providing food and mental health and psychosocial support.

100. Israel was not at war with the Palestinian people but with Hamas. It was not at war with the Lebanese people but with Hizbullah. It was engaged in limited raid operations in southern Lebanon targeting Hizbullah military assets and infrastructure along the Blue Line, in full compliance with international humanitarian law. More than 700 Hizbullah terror assets in Lebanon such as tunnels, missiles, weaponry and launchers, embedded in civilian areas, had been uncovered and destroyed.

101. Urban warfare would always result in tragic deaths and damage, but certain statements that had been made had overlooked the double war crime committed by Hizbullah and Hamas in embedding their assets and operatives among the civilian population and civilian infrastructure, and using them to target the Israeli population indiscriminately. Israel was fulfilling its duty to protect its citizens from terrorist organizations that sought its annihilation and would continue to take all necessary measures, in full compliance with international law, to ensure its people's safety.

102. He recalled that Hamas had held 101 hostages for 376 days in dire conditions in tunnels in Gaza: they must be released immediately. Israel had no desire to be in southern Lebanon. It wished only to protect its people. The innocent populations of Lebanon and Israel must not continue to be held in a terrorist stronghold by Hizbullah. The people of Israel and Lebanon were on the same side, the side of the free world against terrorism.

103. **Mr. Johnson** (Togo) said that Togo had always been a host country, where asylum-seekers and refugees from many walks of life had found assistance and refuge in accordance with international law. There were currently around 49,000 asylum-seekers and refugees in Togo, representing 27 nationalities. That was a significant increase over 2023, mainly resulting from the security crisis in the Sahel.

104. Despite the complex security situation, which affected Togo itself, Togo continued to welcome people from the region, and in particular from Burkina Faso, in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement. To facilitate that task, his Government, with the support of technical partners, including UNHCR, had just completed a nationwide registration drive in order to gather data to create a robust and reliable database. It granted refugee status on a case-by-case basis. All registered asylum-seekers from Burkina Faso had received the necessary documentation.

105. Through the country's national programmes and plans for economic and social protection, refugees and displaced persons had been helped to integrate into Togolese society, and Togo was also a beneficiary of the International Development Association window for host communities and refugees, which strengthened peaceful coexistence between the Togolese people and refugees.

106. His Government had taken several measures to combat statelessness, including adopting a national plan, creating a national commission and acceding to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of

Statelessness. In addition, digitization of identification procedures had meant that over 700,000 certificates of nationality could be issued. Those and other measures would not have been possible without the support of UNHCR, to which his Government wished to express its deep gratitude.

107. **Mr. Tounkara** (Mali) said that Mali had been embroiled in a multidimensional crisis since 2012 that had resulted in mass internal and cross-border displacement. He wished to express his country's gratitude to those neighbouring countries that had offered refuge to Malian citizens.

108. Mali had been actively engaged in combating statelessness for 10 years, putting in place a national plan in 2017 as part of the global campaign to end statelessness. At the seventieth session of the Executive Committee, in 2019, it had undertaken to put in place a programme based on four pillars: identification, by means of a status-determination process; protection, by means of a database to identify persons at risk of statelessness; prevention, by registering births not previously declared to the civil registry; and reduction, by bringing national legislation into full compliance with international instruments on statelessness. A bill on the status of statelessness in Mali had now been drafted on that basis and had just been submitted to the Council of Ministers.

109. In September 2024, there had been more than 300,000 refugees from Mali in the neighbouring countries of Mauritania, the Niger and Burkina Faso, while in the same month the National Commission on the Movement of Populations had registered more than 370,000 internally displaced persons, distributed around more than 260 sites nationwide. An agreement had been signed with UNHCR to improve coordination and management of those facilities.

110. As to refugees on its own territory, Mali worked in close partnership with UNHCR, through the National Commission for Refugees, and had made significant headway in implementing its policy of protection for asylum-seekers. It had ratified the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and, despite its own crisis, continued to fulfil its obligations, currently hosting more than 122,000 refugees of various nationalities. In that context, and as a further measure to help prevent statelessness, the courts had issued late registration certificates on behalf of refugee children born in Mali whose births had not been registered in timely fashion.

111. Mali commended humanitarian workers, particularly those in the Sahel, for their work on many fronts on behalf of populations in difficulty or distress.

112. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that UNHCR was extremely concerned at the situations in Western Africa described by the representative of Togo and at the pressure exerted by populations fleeing from the Sahel region towards coastal States. It was a matter that deserved greater attention and more assistance. UNHCR needed support in its efforts to address the root causes of such movements.

113. He understood the political intricacies that prevailed in Western Africa but immediate action was needed, through humanitarian aid in the first instance but also by trying to address the root causes of the problem, in order to prevent major internal displacements from turning into flows of refugees. Despite the political difficulties, it was something that required regional cooperation. He was grateful to Togo for its efforts to respond to the situation. UNHCR had stepped up its presence in Togo, as the Government had requested. He congratulated Togo and Mali on their progress with regard to statelessness.

114. He wished to assure the representative of Israel that sexual and gender-based violence continued to be a high priority for UNHCR. He echoed the Secretary-General's repeated condemnation of all violations of international humanitarian law, including the firing of rockets at civilian infrastructure and the taking of hostages. The hostages needed to be freed. However, the Secretary-General had also invoked international humanitarian law, which, as the representative of the United Kingdom had said, needed to be respected by everyone. If urban warfare inevitably caused victims, then everything possible should be done to avoid urban warfare. He reiterated his call for a ceasefire in Gaza, and also one in Lebanon to permit the return of those displaced in northern Israel and of the huge numbers displaced in Lebanon.

115. Having recently visited that country, he could fully subscribe to the humanitarian concerns expressed by the representative of Lebanon. He also shared the concerns over the broader consequences of the expansion of the conflict, not only in terms of peace and security in the region and beyond but also in terms of possible displacement beyond Lebanon. Alongside Syrian returnees, there was already an influx of Lebanese refugees to the Syrian Arab Republic. All those developments were indications of what would almost inevitably happen if there was no ceasefire and no end to the hostilities, not to mention the further entrenchment of the hatred and division that had made the quest for peace in the Middle East so difficult in recent decades.

116. UNHCR continued to engage in Yemen, as it had done for decades, albeit in different situations. It was unfortunate that there was less support than in the past for the serious humanitarian crises in that country and he appealed to all donors not to neglect the humanitarian response in Yemen. More resources were needed. The decision to decrease humanitarian support to internally displaced persons had not been taken by UNHCR but by the United Nations, primarily for security reasons, and that prompted him once again to appeal for all concerned to respect international humanitarian law.

117. He thanked the representative of Ireland for the strong support he had expressed for the work of UNHCR. Ireland was increasingly engaged as a donor and had become a very significant voice in debates on numerous important causes. He was grateful for its engagement during its time as a member of the Security Council, and also in other forums in upholding many important causes related to justice, freedom, humanitarian assistance, equality and refugees.

118. Ireland had flagged a number of issues of great importance to UNHCR, such as sexual and gender-based violence, also raised by the representative of Israel. He agreed that the key to sustainability was the establishment of new, meaningful partnerships, and that was at the heart of what UNHCR was trying to do with the World Bank, development institutions, host countries and the private sector.

119. He commended Czechia for taking in such a very large number of Ukrainian refugees, one of the highest numbers in Europe, and for having increased donor support abroad in other crisis situations. He warmly welcomed the unequivocal reaffirmation of the representative of the United Kingdom of his Government's multilateral engagement in very important areas such as peace efforts, climate action, support for the Sustainable Development Goals and for refugee responses. The points he had made regarding efficiency and sustainability had been heard and would be acted on.

120. **Ms. Voicu** (Romania) said that her delegation paid tribute to the humanitarian workers who had perished in the line of duty during the year in Lebanon and elsewhere. Romania continued to fulfil the pledges made at the second Global Refugee Forum. It had met its responsibilities with respect to Ukrainian refugees while taking a whole-of-society approach. By August 2024 nearly 10 million Ukrainian citizens had entered Romania; almost 170,000 had received temporary protection; some 47,000 children had been enrolled in the public education system; around €350 million had been spent on food and accommodation. Ukrainian refugees received numerous forms of support and assistance, in areas such as health, welfare, disability allowances, a minimum wage and the right to work. From July 2024, new arrivals were accommodated in temporary shelters with basic utilities and emergency medical assistance. The Government worked with external partners to create inclusion and integration programmes to ensure respect for the principles of international humanitarian law, human rights and human dignity throughout the process of granting international protection.

121. **Mr. Bichler** (Luxembourg) said that his delegation offered its sincere condolences to UNHCR for the loss of two of its staff members in Lebanon. Luxembourg was seriously concerned by the increasing violence against humanitarian personnel.

122. Luxembourg encouraged UNHCR to continue its efforts under the solutions-oriented, sustainable programming approach in order to promote inclusion, autonomy and resilience for displaced persons and host communities. It took note of the draft programme budget for 2025, the result of prioritization and efficiency efforts to ensure targeted responses despite funding difficulties.



123. With more than 120 million persons forcibly displaced around the world and half of them displaced in their own countries, Luxembourg welcomed the launch of the Focus Area Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2024–2030 and earmarked contributions for the provision of protection and solutions. It would continue to show solidarity with persons under the mandate of UNHCR and with host countries. In the context of its strategic partnership for 2022–2025, Luxembourg undertook to provide predictable multi-year financing to the budget in the amount of €33.4 million.

124. In the conviction that digital inclusion would help make a difference for thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, Luxembourg was a co-founder of the multiparty Connectivity for Refugees initiative, together with UNHCR, the International Telecommunication Union and the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) Association. It was also providing political support to that initiative.

125. Luxembourg supported an early warning and rapid response system to deal with forced displacement that was being developed in cooperation with the Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology as a means of anticipating and reacting to humanitarian crises.

126. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that Bangladesh had been encouraged by the commitments that had been made at the second Global Refugee Forum to support UNHCR, to ensure sustainable humanitarian assistance to refugees and to bring about durable solutions to the refugee crisis. However, owing in part to the emergence of new conflicts and the continued impact of long-standing crises, an unprecedented number of people were fleeing their homes around the world and seeking international protection. Moreover, people were increasingly being forced to leave their homes for reasons linked to climate conditions. In 2022, 84 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers had fled countries with high levels of climate change vulnerability. At the same time, however, a significant percentage of forcibly displaced and stateless persons lived in countries that were vulnerable to climate change. The importance attached by the High Commissioner to the Focus Area Strategic Plan for Climate Action 2024–2030 was therefore welcome.

127. Developing countries continued to shoulder the burden of hosting the majority of global refugees, something that seriously undermined their development efforts. International cooperation, based on the principle of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, had therefore become more important than ever. The international community needed to remain steadfast in its efforts to find durable solutions and to address the root causes of displacement. It was also important for UNHCR to build strategic partnerships with international financial institutions, development partners and the private sector.

128. Bangladesh had been hosting some 1.2 million forcibly displaced Rohingya people from Myanmar for the previous seven years, and over 30,000 more people had recently arrived following an escalation of the conflict in Rakhine State. They had been provided with spacious camps equipped with modern facilities and had been given access to primary and secondary education. The Government of Bangladesh counted on concerted international support to help to create livelihood opportunities for the community. However, the presence of such a large displaced community had threatened social and environmental stability in Cox's Bazar, and some Rohingyas were involved in criminal activities.

129. The Rohingya crisis had originated in Myanmar, and that was where the solution would be found. The realization of the right to return of the Rohingya people was the starting point from which they could gradually secure their basic rights and be integrated into society. The Government of Bangladesh had noted the keen interest of the authorities in Myanmar in welcoming displaced Rohingya people back to their country, and it welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to ascertain levels of willingness to return among members of the displaced community. It was heartened by the High Commissioner's continued focus on the Rohingya crisis and had been encouraged by his recent exchange with Muhammad Yunus, the Chief Adviser of the interim Government.

130. At a time of such precarity, disastrous climate events and natural calamities could render traditional humanitarian assistance and protections ineffectual. Bangladesh welcomed the launch of the UNHCR Climate Resilience Fund and called for the international community to establish a separate global climate fund dedicated to refugees.

131. **Mr. Payot** (Belgium) said that, given the unprecedented number of displaced people around the world, the growing gap between their needs and the resources made available to respond to them was a matter of great concern. The war of aggression waged by Russia in Ukraine, the increasingly catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, Lebanon, the Sudan, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, the Sahel and other unresolved conflicts and crises in other parts of the world had forced millions of people to flee their homes. Regarding the situation in the Middle East, Belgium called for an immediate ceasefire by all parties, the release of hostages and a return to dialogue. His country was and would remain committed to upholding international law, international humanitarian law and the multilateral architecture.

132. Belgium made flexible, unearmarked, multi-year contributions to UNHCR and had increased its contributions for the period 2024–2026. That structural support should enable UNHCR to develop a response to forgotten crises, which were a priority for his country. Belgium also supported the search for sustainable solutions, in line with the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum. Humanitarian aid must benefit both displaced persons and host populations. In the face of complex and protracted crises, UNHCR was encouraged to work with development actors to break down barriers and seek sustainable solutions aimed at empowering both communities, thereby reducing reliance on aid. The UNHCR Institutional Plan on Solutions to Internal Displacement was a step in the right direction in that regard, and close coordination with other international organizations, particularly IOM, remained essential.

133. Protection should be at the heart of all humanitarian action. Belgium therefore called for increased funding for protection initiatives and those aimed at prevention and proactive protection. It also supported the High Commissioner's efforts towards decentralization and regionalization, which, would improve the efficiency and flexibility of its work, so long as its structure did not become overly compartmentalized.

134. Belgium firmly supported the vision of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and had recently enacted a new law on statelessness granting the right of residence to stateless persons who were not covered by the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

135. **Ms. Izata** (Angola) said that, in 2023, Angola had launched a campaign to register refugees and issue them with identification documents, thereby ensuring that their rights were recognized. The Government also continued the process of granting residence permits to former refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda to whom cessation clauses had applied as part of its local integration efforts. The registration of refugee families was carried out throughout the country, with a special emphasis on the birth registration of children born to refugees in Angola. In accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the Government continued to expand the scope of civil registration of its citizens at home and abroad in an inclusive and participatory process. As an illustration of its commitment to the work of UNHCR, Angola had made a voluntary contribution amounting to \$100,000 during the previous session of the Executive Committee.

136. The I Belong campaign had made a positive impact in Angola by accelerating progress towards eradicating statelessness. Angola therefore pledged to join the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and would support UNHCR in its efforts to achieve the goals set under that new initiative.

137. **Mr. Boutadghart** (Morocco) said that the concept of sustainable programming could help UNHCR to respond more effectively to the growing challenges associated with humanitarian emergencies. Better inclusion of refugees in their host communities was to be welcomed, and Morocco had taken a lead role in developing a pledge on the health of refugees at the Global Refugee Forum, which had been signed by 48 States.

138. For many decades, Morocco had dealt with mixed movements with dignity, humanity and responsibility. Its human approach to border management could be used in the formulation of a route-based approach. It also attached the utmost importance to rescue missions at sea. In 2023, its maritime authorities had saved the lives of more than 10,000 people during such operations. At the same time, it called for an end to violent and arbitrary cases of refoulement that exposed families to new dangers and increased insecurity,

particularly in neighbouring countries and regions, where helpless migrants had been abandoned in the middle of the desert.

139. Humanitarian organizations must be given free, unlimited and unconditional access to refugee camps. The rights of refugees must not be sacrificed on the altar of narrow political interests. Morocco called on UNHCR to strengthen its measures aimed at ensuring the transparency of its operations and combating the misappropriation of humanitarian aid; every penny must be used to relieve distress and restore the dignity of refugees with a view to achieving their voluntary return. Furthermore, humanitarian aid must not be used as an instrument to keep displaced populations prisoner, especially by States that generated considerable income through the exploitation of natural resources. It was also time for the international community and UNHCR to exert greater pressure on host States to carry out the transparent and regular registration of refugees at camps.

140. Almost 1.2 million people had been displaced in the space of a few days in Lebanon, which, according to UNHCR, had the highest number of refugees per capita and per square kilometre in the world. One year on from the unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Morocco underlined its firm position in favour of an immediate ceasefire and the urgent authorization of the entry of humanitarian aid. It also warned of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the continuing deterioration of the situation in the Sudan and called for the support of the international community.

141. **Mr. Sterk** (Bulgaria) said that, despite the pledges made by the members of the Executive Committee year after year to address violence and human suffering around the world, the number of forcibly displaced persons continued to grow. The ongoing Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the deepening humanitarian and security crises in Gaza and Lebanon, appalling situations in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Afghanistan and Syria, and that faced by the Rohingya people, continued to test the ability of the international community to prevent and respond adequately to the consequences of mass displacements. Bulgaria called for immediate action to address the root causes of forced displacement, guarantee full respect for human rights and humanitarian law and ensure the provision of humanitarian aid and relief in a secure and sustainable manner. It appreciated the role played by UNHCR in raising awareness of the needs of displaced persons on the ground and welcomed its adoption of the policy on emergency preparedness and response.

142. At the Global Refugee Forum, the Government had pledged to increase the number of resettled persons in Bulgaria. It welcomed the commitment of UNHCR to continue addressing the concerns and needs of persons in vulnerable situations, especially children, women and girls and persons with disabilities, and to pursue inclusive protection and innovative solutions. In that regard, the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees had developed a new project to create alternative solutions providing comprehensive social care services for unaccompanied refugee children. The project was focused on the specific needs of refugee children with the aim of achieving their full inclusion in the community outside the reception centres managed by the Agency. Bulgaria remained committed to the global fight to end statelessness and would continue to make financial contributions to UNHCR in support of its efforts to assist host countries, to protect refugees and to find sustainable solutions.

143. **Mr. Bladehane** (Algeria) said that the global humanitarian situation was deteriorating with every passing year. Furthermore, the main reasons for forced displacement remained the same: the persistence of colonialism, persecution, wars and the increasingly tangible effects of climate change. Africa remained the continent that was most affected by the phenomenon, and the international community must therefore show its commitment to equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing by providing African countries with the support they needed to protect displaced persons.

144. It was important for all States to take action to fulfil the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in order to alleviate the suffering of refugees and the heavy burden placed on host countries. The implementation of sustainable solutions that addressed the causes of displacement and promoted voluntary return was an essential part of that process. Algeria had made pledges concerning the issues of education and health at the Forum. In that regard, it continued to provide the displaced Saharan people living in camps in its territory with access to education and healthcare services. In fulfilment of a separate pledge, the drafting

of a law on asylum providing for the establishment of an autonomous refugee agency had already reached an advanced stage.

145. The Executive Committee must reject any attempts to politicize humanitarian efforts to support refugees. It was not appropriate, for example, to discuss the political situation in Western Sahara at the current meeting. Moreover, it was paradoxical that the country that had caused the suffering of the Saharan refugees should call on Algeria to respect its international commitments. The country in question had no legitimacy to discuss those people, since it neither hosted them in its territory nor donated money to help their cause. Algeria continued to fulfil its humanitarian duty with respect to those refugees and encouraged the international community to maintain its support for them.

146. The disastrous humanitarian consequences of the aggression of the occupying force in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were a major cause for concern. The same aggressor had continued to show total disregard for the fundamental principles of international law and international humanitarian law by invading Lebanon. Algeria unequivocally condemned the massacres perpetrated against civilians and humanitarian workers and called on the international community to use all its power to hold the colonial Power to account. At the same time, it encouraged UNHCR to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the thousands of people displaced as a result of the aggression.

147. **Ms. Duncan** (New Zealand) said that the scale, scope, duration and complexity of humanitarian crises around the world continued to increase. The number of displaced persons as a proportion of the overall global population had doubled in the previous 10 years, and UNHCR projected that up to 3 million people would have resettlement needs in 2025. Crises related to heightened food insecurity, climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation were leading to further destabilization, and the persistent surge in forced displacement owing to armed conflict was a matter of particularly grave concern. In that regard, New Zealand unequivocally condemned the unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russia on Ukraine, which had caused immense suffering and significant displacement. The conflict in the Middle East continued to have a catastrophic impact on Palestinians and, increasingly, on other civilian populations in the wider region. New Zealand was particularly concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Sudan, which was contending with the largest internal displacement crisis in the world alongside disease outbreaks, climate shocks and famine.

148. New Zealand had consistently provided UNHCR with unearmarked, multi-year funding to enable it to respond to crises. Over the previous year, it had supplemented that funding with contributions to the humanitarian protection and assistance programmes developed by UNHCR for Sudanese and Ukrainian refugees. Implementation of the long-standing New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme was just one illustration of her Government's commitment to finding resettlement solutions for refugees. In the previous year, it had fulfilled its pledge to resettle 1,500 refugees with priority protection needs and had granted residency to 600 persons under the Refugee Family Support Resident Visa scheme. It remained committed to honouring its pledges in relation to meaningful refugee participation, refugee employment and self-sufficiency and the inclusion of refugees in health systems.

149. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that New Zealand continued to make reliable, flexible, multi-year contributions to UNHCR. It had also put in place one of the most significant resettlement programmes of any country. That was particularly appreciated by UNHCR, as resettlement was such an important gesture of burden-sharing.

150. The representative of Bangladesh had made a very important point concerning the link between the need for climate action related to displacement and sustainability. For support to refugees and host communities to be sustainable, it must take climate action into account. Bangladesh had made considerable efforts over the decades, and above all over the previous seven years, to deal with waves of refugees arriving from Myanmar. UNHCR had made every effort to support Bangladesh in upholding its traditional hospitality to the people crossing the borders. The new arrivals also needed protection, since they were fleeing a renewed difficult situation in Rakhine State. Efforts to create conditions for displaced people

to return to their country of origin must take primacy and, despite the security risks, UNHCR continued to work in Rakhine State to try to bring communities together there. It also stood ready to support any dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Ensuring access to education for Rohingya refugees was very important. It was necessary to give hope and opportunity to young people in displaced communities. Otherwise, they could become a liability for the host country and the region.

151. As a host country and transit country, Morocco was very committed to the issue of migration and shared the importance that UNHCR attached to the implementation of sustainable support and a host-based approach. UNHCR greatly appreciated the pledges that Morocco had made at the Global Refugee Forum. In line with the comments by the representative of Morocco, civilian issues and the depoliticization of humanitarian aid remained at the heart of the work of UNHCR. He also wished to reassure the representative of Algeria that UNHCR would not lose sight of the situation of Saharan refugees. A political solution to that situation was needed, since it was not possible to carry out appropriate humanitarian work amid a climate of political tension. In that respect, he trusted that Algeria would defend humanitarian principles as a current member of the Security Council.

152. Angola had set an example to other countries by making the financial contribution that it had announced at the previous session of the Executive Committee. He appreciated the efforts made by Angola to integrate the persons mentioned by the delegation to whom cessation clauses had applied.

153. Luxembourg was both a flexible donor and a political ally of UNHCR. It took a multi-year approach to its funding contributions designed to ensure that UNHCR could sustain its work over the long term. It was committed to making progress on digital inclusion, connectivity and early warning systems, issues that the Deputy High Commissioner would discuss with the Government on his forthcoming visit to the country. Belgium was another flexible donor and seemingly became more generous with each passing year. The delegation had drawn attention to host communities, whose situation must not be overlooked, especially in countries affected by large influxes that had few resources. The centrality of protection was also important. Regionalization did not mean fragmentation, and UNHCR must sustain a unified vision even as its operations became more regionalized. He had witnessed at first hand the important and generous work carried out in Romania on behalf of Ukrainian refugees. UNHCR would continue to support those efforts. He also encouraged Bulgaria to continue its important efforts concerning the resettlement of Syrian refugees and the reception of unaccompanied minors.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*