

76th Session of the Executive Committee of UNHCR

Reports of the Standing Committee

Item 14: Closing of the Session

Statement by Ambassador Marcelo Vázquez-Bermúdez

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Ecuador to the United Nations

Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Chair of the Executive Committee

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Mr. High Commissioner, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends,

Today marks the conclusion of a year of intense work as Chair of the Executive Committee of UNHCR. It has been a challenging yet deeply enriching period, one that has allowed me to contribute—through multilateral diplomacy—to a cause that speaks to the very core of our humanity: the protection of those forced to flee to save their lives or preserve their freedom.

Representing the Executive Committee in a global context marked by unprecedented forced displacement, growing fragility, and financial constraints has been both a privilege and a great responsibility.

I undertook this role with the commitment to foster a frank dialogue on the sustainability of the global humanitarian response, the strengthening of multilateralism, and the need to implement durable solutions. In that spirit, I had the privilege of guiding the debates of the Standing Committee, building bridges among delegations, supporting follow-up to the Global Compact on Refugees, and

helping maintain political attention to protracted crises—some of which risk being forgotten.

Mr. High Commissioner, dear colleagues,

One of the most meaningful experiences of this mandate was my visit to Bangladesh and Thailand, where I witnessed firsthand the immense challenges faced by refugees and stateless persons, despite the generosity and tremendous efforts of the host countries. In the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar and Tham Hin, I heard deeply moving testimonies. In both contexts, despite harsh conditions and funding shortfalls, I found one constant: hope. Above all, the hope of young people in education, in the possibility of a future with rights. I also witnessed an urgent call for change: more opportunities, more inclusion, and—above all—a political solution to the conflict in Myanmar, without which progress toward return and durable solutions will not be possible.

It is essential that the international community promotes the peaceful settlement of disputes, based on international law, and the prevention and cessation of armed conflicts and other crises, which are at the root of the displacement of more than 120 million people today.

As Chair of the Executive Committee, I have also witnessed the increasingly severe impact of the humanitarian funding gap, which threatens to undermine the very foundations of international protection. In this context, I joined the High Commissioner's calls to diversify funding sources, promote innovation, and uphold humanitarian principles.

But beyond resources, this year I reaffirmed the importance of international shared responsibility. We cannot continue to place most of the burden of response solely on host countries, many of which are making enormous efforts despite their limited resources and are experiencing their own economic and social crises. We need a fairer distribution of responsibilities, greater international cooperation, and decisive action by countries with greater capacities.

From my experience as an Ecuadorian diplomat, I have shared in various forums Ecuador's approach as a host country, which has embraced socioeconomic inclusion as a key tool for protection and social cohesion. This perspective must be central if we want to move toward sustainable response models.

I have also sought to bring attention to the situation of forgotten refugees, stateless persons, and those in protracted displacement with no clear prospects for solutions. I have firmly defended the principle of non-refoulement and the respect for the fundamental rights of refugees.

Mr. High Commissioner, distinguished delegates,

Today, my term as Chair of the Executive Committee comes to an end, but not my commitment to this noble cause. I wish to express my deep gratitude to the Secretariat of the Executive Committee, to the UNHCR team in Geneva and in the field—especially to Anne Keah and Mercedes Jakupi—to my team at the Permanent

Mission of Ecuador, and to all delegations for the cooperation, respect, and constructive spirit that have characterized your participation throughout this year.

I also wish to thank my fellow Bureau members: Ambassador Bilal Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan and First Vice-Chair; Ambassador Tsegab Kebebew Daka, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia and Second Vice-Chair; and Ms. Lisa Advani, of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Rapporteur, for their constant support and collaboration throughout the year.

In times of increasing polarization, the international refugee protection system remains one of the clearest expressions of principled multilateralism. Safeguarding it—and strengthening it—is a shared responsibility.

I extend special recognition to the High Commissioner, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for his monumental contribution to humanitarian work. His remarkable leadership has been key to the organization's efforts. It has been a true pleasure to work closely with him and to witness his extraordinary stewardship, especially during such a difficult year.

Distinguished delegates, much remains to be done—and many reasons remain to persevere. I have seen with my own eyes that even in the most difficult contexts, resilience endures; that young refugees continue to dream of a future of fulfillment—they only ask for an opportunity. And that many communities continue to extend a helping hand. Our task, therefore, is to live up to that hope—to translate it into tangible results.

The imperative for global solidarity in responding to an unrelenting humanitarian crisis is clear. The causes of displacement are multiple and complex. Each region faces unique challenges, but the human impact is universal: shattered communities, separated families, and uncertain futures.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. And above all, thank you for keeping sight of what truly matters: that behind every number, there is a story, a community, a family, a life that deserves protection—and a hope we must not allow to fade.

Thank you very much.