

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

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**Standing Committee**

**Ninety-fourth meeting**

8–9 September 2025

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

**Summary record\*, Tuesday, 9 September 2025, at 10.00 a.m.**

*Chairperson: Mr. Marcelo Vázquez Bermúdez.....(Ecuador)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m.*

### **3. Programme budgets and funding**

#### **(a) Update on budgets and funding (EC/76/SC/CRP.24)**

1. The **Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (UNHCR)** provided an update on budgets and funding. The 2025 budget remained at \$10.6 billion, with two supplementary budgets approved earlier in the year. She reported that UNHCR had responded to 22 active emergency declarations in 16 countries, including 14 emergencies declared in 2024 that continued in 2025 (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Sudan situation, the Myanmar earthquake and the return of Afghan nationals). She said that expenditure by population group was mostly consistent with expenditures from last year with 81 per cent of expenditure for refugees and asylum-seekers focused programmes. There had been a slight increase in expenditure for programmes to address statelessness but expenditures were higher for returnees compared to last year (Afghanistan, Burundi and the Syrian Arab Republic). UNHCR was reducing expenditure for internally displaced persons, in line with the Humanitarian Reset reform initiative.

2. She stated that expenditure had decreased in all regions compared to 2024, with the most significant reductions in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region. She noted that these reductions reflected greater opportunities for inclusion in national systems of countries surrounding Ukraine, opportunities for returns, focused programming for internally displaced persons, and the consolidation of the operational footprint, including closures, mergers and downsizing of field structures and staffing. She said that, in terms of impact areas, protection remained a priority, with only modest decreases in expenditure for activities such as registration, refugee status determination, prevention of gender-based violence, child protection, and protection policy and law. She added that delivery of assistance had seen the largest decline due to targeted approach to assistance delivery as the UNHCR shifted to work more closely with development actors. She also stated that expenditure had decreased in education, health, shelter and WASH, although targeted support continued to the most vulnerable in contexts where the needs were the greatest and where development partners were unavailable.

3. She noted that results achieved by mid-year compared with last year were in line with expenditure patterns. She highlighted that support for returnees increased with more counselling on voluntary repatriation and greater outreach for livelihood activities. Support to gender-based violence survivors and shelter assistance had been maintained at similar levels as the previous year. She added that UNHCR had been forced to reduce some activities due to limited resources: slower rate of registration, reduced amount of cash assistance and fewer health consultations. She stated that UNHCR would face challenges in achieving its targets in the second half of the year, however, prioritization of core protection activities, emergency response and support for durable solutions would continue while appealing for further resources to meet these gaps.

4. The **Director of the Division of External Relations (UNHCR)** said that as of late August, the 2025 budget was 31 per cent funded, with \$3.3 billion in contributions. Governments and the European Union accounted for 81 per cent of contributions, private donors for 14 per cent, pooled funds for 3 per cent and the United Nations regular budget for 2 per cent. Noting that the number of displaced and stateless people had risen sharply, creating a widening gap between needs and available resources, she pointed out that the increase in tightly earmarked contributions further limited flexibility.

5. She said that the United States of America remained the largest donor, followed by the private sector, the European Union and several European and North American countries. She underlined the importance of flexible and unearmarked contributions, noting that private sector fundraising was growing with 3.2 million individuals contributing and a 14 per cent increase in individual giving compared to the previous year. She also highlighted new private sector partnerships, including a climate-resilient health project in Ethiopia.

6. She underlined that funding cuts had a severe human impact, citing her recent visit to Uganda, where nearly two million refugees, half of them children, were facing reductions in food, health, education and protection services. She recalled meeting unaccompanied children, including a 16-year-old girl caring for her four younger siblings, as an example of the urgent needs. She recognized the commitment of countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees, including Chad, Colombia, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye and Uganda, which together hosted nearly 40 per cent of the world's refugees.

7. She stated that the outlook for 2026 was concerning, with an expected further decline in Official Development Assistance and humanitarian funding together with the likelihood of new income coming from tightly earmarked sources. She appealed for timely, predictable and flexible multi-year contributions to sustain programming. She said that UNHCR was engaged in the Humanitarian Reset reform initiative, working with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to harmonize refugee coordination models, align with United Nations cooperation frameworks and strengthen partnerships with non-government organizations and local actors. She concluded by urging member States to increase their support for forcibly displaced populations and to work together to find peace so that people can go back home.

8. The representative of **Uganda, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group**, noted that with only three months left in the year, only 30 per cent of the budget had been funded, calling this a grim reality for Africa, which hosts more than 50 million persons of concern to UNHCR. She highlighted the grave humanitarian situation in the Sudan, describing it as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, with massive internal displacement and refugee influxes straining fragile regional infrastructure. She stressed that this should concern all and called for renewed and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing to protect innocent children, women and men trapped in the conflict. She underlined that the in-kind contributions of land, infrastructure, services, and security provided by African host countries had an unmeasured monetary value, which should remind partners that the burden they shoulder is equally heavy and must be shared. She emphasized that African host countries had not announced any shift in their priorities toward refugees, in contrast to trends observed among some donors. While appreciating committed donor partners, she echoed the need for more donors to step forward and respond to the High Commissioner's call for timely funding. Turning to the 2026 budget, she expressed concern about the reduction from \$10.6 billion in 2025 to \$8.5 billion in 2026. She said that because the budget is needs-based, increasing displacement should lead to proportionate increases rather than decreases. She acknowledged that some savings may have resulted from efficiency gains, administrative reductions, staff cuts and office closures, but requested clarity on whether the \$2 billion reduction affected only administrative costs or also direct support to persons of concern. She expressed serious concern about the closure of the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa as a cost-saving measure, carried out without structured consultations with the affected countries. She noted that the 2026 budget contained no dedicated allocation for Southern Africa and requested clarification on how much had been factored into the budget of the Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes to cover the needs previously managed by the Southern Africa Bureau. She further asked whether closing the Bureau would yield the intended results, given that it had historically had the lowest budget of all bureaus. She noted that a significant percentage of the overall budget was allocated to servicing salaries for UNHCR staff and to administrative costs for partners, and therefore requested clarification of the figures presented in the 2026 Programme Budget. Referring to page 62 of the budget document, she asked for a detailed explanation of the "other expenditure" category, which accounted for 38 per cent of total expenditure. She expressed concern that, aside from 5 per cent spent on supplies and materials and 12 per cent on cash-based interventions, most of the budget appeared to be allocated to administrative costs. She questioned how self-reliance for refugees could be achieved if less than 17 per cent of the budget was allocated to actual interventions and opportunities to foster financial independence. She requested detailed information on the repatriation and termination costs associated with the more than 4,400 staff cuts referenced by the Deputy High Commissioner. She asked whether these termination benefits had been budgeted for and, if so, in what amount, and if not, how UNHCR intended to cover the accrued obligations. She further requested a breakdown of expenditures for staff in between assignments and asked for projections of related costs in 2026, as well as

information on how human resources was working to minimize these expenditures. She concluded by urging the High Commissioner to call for urgent, flexible, and unearmarked funding to enable timely responses to emergencies across Africa and confirmed that the Africa Group would support the adoption of the annexed budget decision, pending responses to the concerns raised.

9. The representative of **Pakistan**, speaking on behalf of the **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, expressed deep concern over funding cuts and their adverse impacts on the structure, functions, and staff of the organization and their far-reaching implications for forcibly displaced populations. He noted the decrease in budget allocations for refugee-hosting states in OIC member States and underscored the need to expand the donor base with more flexible funding to allow swift responses to emergencies. He highlighted recent collaboration with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to facilitate the issuance of fatwas for the use of zakat and Islamic philanthropy for refugees and displaced populations, describing this as a positive development. He recalled that OIC countries have hosted the majority of refugees for decades, reflecting a strong commitment to humanitarian values. He called on the international community to ensure equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, scale up financing solutions consistent with agreed principles, and invest in the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, particularly in fostering peace, stability, and development in countries of origin.

10. The representative of **Sweden** recognized the difficult choices made, given the unprecedented funding challenges and their impact on persons of concern and staff. He reaffirmed his country's partnership with UNHCR to deliver principled humanitarian assistance and requested further insight into needs assessment and prioritization methodologies. He emphasized the importance of flexible, unearmarked funding and confirmed that his country remained a steadfast partner by providing multiyear contributions, while encouraging others to join the Nordic, Dutch, and Swiss pledge on quality humanitarian funding. He welcomed the engagement of UNHCR with the private sector and non-traditional donors. He commended reform efforts in oversight, risk management, cost efficiency, and human resources, and supported annual updates on efficiency gains. He noted the alignment of UNHCR with the UN80 and Humanitarian Reset reform initiatives. He underlined his country's support for maintaining core protection capacities, including prevention of gender-based violence and protection for women, girls, boys, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other refugees. He stressed the importance of refugee inclusion and alignment with national systems, and reaffirmed support for durable solutions, including resettlement with priority for women, girls, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex refugees in the Great Lakes region.

11. The representative of **Pakistan**, speaking in his national capacity, sought clarity on the rationale for the allocations to refugees (81 per cent), returnees (7 per cent), and internally displaced persons (11 per cent); and whether UNHCR intended to increase budgetary support to facilitate returns of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin to prevent secondary displacement or crossing international borders and becoming refugees. With reference to the policy on sustainable responses, he queried if there was any thinking on the part of UNHCR to increase the allocation to facilitate returns in order to sustain those internally displaced in their own countries.

12. The representative of **Switzerland** expressed concern about the widening gap between needs and resources. He noted that the 2025 budget of \$10.6 billion was only 23 per cent funded mid-year, projecting a deficit of \$6.6 billion. He pointed out that contributions had declined by approximately \$1 billion compared to the previous year, weakening the capacity of UNHCR to respond to 22 active emergencies in 16 countries. He raised concerns that the proposed 2026 budget, reduced to \$8.5 billion, reflects cost-cutting and restructuring measures that may limit coverage. He asked whether coverage by national systems in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa regions had been agreed upon with host States or whether it was an assumption made by UNHCR; sought clarification on whether reductions in operations would be compensated by other United Nations agencies or development actors, or if they risked leaving critical gaps in assistance; and requested details on how UNHCR planned to ensure that vulnerable populations would not be excluded from support as a result of these adjustments. He asked whether assumptions that countries in Europe and the Middle

East can leverage their national systems to reduce reliance on UNHCR had been discussed or agreed with the countries concerned, or whether these were unilateral assumptions. He questioned whether reductions would truly be offset by other United Nations actors or development partners, warning of the risk that populations may fall through the cracks. He emphasized the importance of equitable burden-sharing in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and underlined that funding cannot rely on a handful of donors. He called for translation of pledges into contributions, particularly in the form of flexible funding. He commended the efficiency efforts of UNHCR but expressed concerns that the internal review was being rushed, urging the agency to maintain operational capacity and institutional integrity.

13. The representative of the **Netherlands (Kingdom of the)** said that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union on behalf of its member States and expressed appreciation for the regular updates on the review process. She noted the challenge of a needs-driven budget as the population of concern increases, raising questions about whether the budget remained truly needs-driven in the context of reduced organizational capacity and prioritization. She questioned whether a needs-driven budget could still be considered the best model to present the budget. She welcomed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to improve budget presentation and suggested that UNHCR could follow practices to present operational requirements in line with other agencies, such as the United Nations World Food Programme and requested UNHCR's reflection on the recommendations. She welcomed the establishment of the Sustainable Response Service and queried how sustainable responses would be integrated in future programme budgets, requesting clarification on the foreseen budgetary process behind sustainable response related interventions. She stressed the importance of maintaining attention to organizational, human resources, and programming aspects of sustainable responses and called for regular updates to member States. Finally, she commended the proactive role of UNHCR in the UN80 and Humanitarian Reset reform initiatives and requested clarity on how the Humanitarian Reset relates to the humanitarian cluster of the UN80 initiative.

14. The representative of **Türkiye** expressed concern that declining humanitarian funds undermine the effectiveness of global humanitarian operations, including those of UNHCR, and place forcibly displaced persons at heightened risk. He noted that global humanitarian needs continued to grow at an unprecedented scale and stressed that doing less with less should not mean leaving refugees or host communities behind. He emphasized the importance of international solidarity and responsibility-sharing. He underlined that the protection and assistance work of UNHCR remained vital and indispensable, as there was no other institution with equivalent capacity and expertise. As one of the world's top refugee-hosting countries, the representative reaffirmed his country's commitment to working closely with UNHCR to support displaced persons even in difficult circumstances.

15. The representative of **Ecuador** noted that as of 31 July, the annual budget stood at \$10.6 billion while available funds were barely \$3.9 billion, leaving a gap of more than \$6.6 billion, or 63 per cent of requirements. She said that, as a host to significant numbers of refugees and others in need of international protection, her country knew firsthand how funding shortfalls compromised immediate emergency responses and progress on local integration and access to basic services essential for host community stability. She reiterated the need for adequate, predictable and flexible funding, appealed for strengthened unearmarked contributions to ensure agile and equitable responses to urgent needs and underlined the importance of burden- and responsibility-sharing, recognizing the efforts of host countries such as hers. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to work with UNHCR and member States to guarantee an effective, solidarity-based response for refugees and receiving communities.

16. The representative of the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** said that many developing countries in the Global South hosted refugees and forcibly displaced persons despite structural, economic and social constraints. He said this solidarity was increasingly threatened by new forms of neocolonialism, including unlawful unilateral coercive measures, which undermined internal capacities and humanitarian obligations. He said it was alarming that the 2025 budget of \$10.6 billion was far from met as of 31 July, weakening the response

to 22 active crises. He said growing fragmentation, conditioning and earmarking of contributions undermined fundamental principles and stressed that flexible, unconditional funding should be the rule to guarantee operational agility and strategic prioritization. He said earmarking politicized the process, compromised impartiality and equity and increased vulnerability. He concluded that the global refugee situation required a collective, immediate response with adequate resources and political will.

17. The representative of **Finland** noted that unprecedented funding cuts alongside increasing needs had forced difficult decisions, and appreciated the unwavering commitment of UNHCR to international protection. She said limited resources must be used efficiently and effectively, with enhanced coordination and collaboration across the humanitarian system. She commended the participation of UNHCR in the Humanitarian Reset and United Nations reform processes, stressing that reforms must be guided by humanitarian principles and centred on people in the most vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities. She encouraged diversification of the donor base and welcomed the growth in private sector funding. She said flexible, predictable funding was key and noted her country's long-standing provision of multi-year, highly flexible support. She reiterated her country's commitment to UNHCR and appreciation for refugee-hosting countries.

18. The representative of **Peru** noted that his country had become one of the principal countries receiving asylum-seekers in Latin America and the Caribbean, and had faced an unprecedented increase in workload over the past decade. He said decreased funding seriously threatened assistance to vulnerable people and jeopardized compliance with international protection commitments. He stated that cooperation with UNHCR, including an institutional agreement enabling specialized staffing, technical assistance and continuous training, was a key pillar for the sustainability of his country's refugee system and the implementation of regional and international commitments. He emphasized the need to ensure continuity of international funding, adhering to the principle of shared responsibility, to prevent weakening national protection systems across the Global South.

19. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said that her country took note of the advance version of the 2026 programme budget and would welcome further assessment of the current financial position, including year-to-date and full-year forecasts. She requested a detailed assessment of the liquidity and reserves of UNHCR, including any implications for its capacity to respond to emergencies. Referring to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, she underlined the importance of moving from a needs-based budget to a more transparent and realistic funding framework. In a context of a shrinking organization, UNHCR's assessment was requested on whether the current needs-based methodology enabled the necessary prioritization and if it allowed sufficient clarity on trade-offs. Information was sought on how future budgets could better reflect strategic prioritization and align more realistically with available resources. She concluded by expressing her country's support for the draft decision on budgets and funding for 2025.

20. The representative of **Egypt, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group**, said that the Group commended the reports and efforts by UNHCR to protect refugees and persons of concern. He stated that, despite rising needs in the Middle East and North Africa region and geopolitical tensions, UNHCR had reduced its 2026 budget by 20 per cent, and the 2025 budget was only 31 per cent funded, leaving an ever-growing gap with serious consequences for its response capacity. He sought clarification on the operational impact of these reductions in major refugee-hosting countries, the mitigation measures planned to prevent disruption of life-saving programmes, and how UNHCR intended to sustain assistance amid persistent underfunding. He also requested updates on the implementation of pledges from the previous Global Refugee Forum and on how the upcoming High-Level Officials Meeting would help translate those commitments into tangible support. He called on the international community to shoulder responsibilities towards refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, expand unearmarked funding and uphold responsibility-sharing. He emphasized the importance of the implementation of pledges and the upcoming High-Level Officials Meeting before the Global Refugee Forum. He said that the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had no substitute, expressed grave concern at famine in Gaza,

condemned starvation as a weapon and siege practices, rejected forced displacement and called for financial and in-kind support for reconstruction. He highlighted the worsening situation in the Sudan, with over ten million internally displaced persons and more than three million who had fled to neighbouring countries, condemned the siege of El-Fasher and the use of starvation tactics and called for respect for the sovereignty and independence of the Sudan and increased solidarity. He welcomed the facilitation of returns to the Syrian Arab Republic and the 26 per cent increase in funding for solutions in the Middle East and North Africa region, stressed the importance of not conflating migration and refugee issues and reaffirmed that voluntary return was the preferred solution.

21. The representative of **Egypt**, in his national capacity, noted that his country aligned itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Africa Group, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab Group. He said that his country was alarmed by the intention to reduce next year's budget by 20 per cent and concerned that only 31 per cent of the 2025 budget had been secured as of August. He noted that the number of forcibly displaced and stateless persons was projected to reach 136 million by end-2026. He stated that his country hosted more than one million registered refugees and asylum-seekers from 63 nationalities, as well as over ten million migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and persons in refugee-like situations. He described his country's one-refugee approach that provided access to health, education and social protection on an equal footing, but which was straining resources and infrastructure and said additional support was needed as new asylum applications were expected to rise. He requested clarification on the allocation of resources for countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, particularly for his country; asked whether additional support was foreseen for national systems providing education and health services to refugees; and sought information on how UNHCR intended to strengthen partnerships with host governments implementing inclusive refugee policies. He noted that his country's December 2024 refugee law aligned with the 1951 Refugee Convention, prioritizing vulnerable persons and prohibiting refoulement. He called for equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, strengthened funding commitments and innovative approaches to meet needs and expressed strong support for the efforts done by UNHCR.

22. The representative of **Australia** acknowledged the high number of newly declared emergencies in 2025 and the difficult prioritization needed across evolving and protracted crises. She thanked UNHCR for maintaining funding for operations in Afghanistan and Thailand, addressing returns and statelessness. She noted with concern the projected 2025 funding gap and the estimate that persons of concern could reach 136 million in 2026. She welcomed ongoing dialogue to ensure the efficient use of limited resources and appreciated the proposed efforts in the 2026 budget to sustain funding for Asia and the Pacific, while expressing concern about extensive cuts to evaluations and about liquidity issues raised by the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee. She requested clarification on the measures being taken to safeguard liquidity and financial stability in 2026, asked about the concrete impact of cost-containment and efficiency initiatives on operational delivery, and sought reassurance that the reduction in evaluation functions would not weaken oversight and accountability. She requested information on ensuring liquidity and on the actual financial impact of cost-containment and efficiency measures in 2026. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to predictable, multi-year flexible funding and support for the mandate of UNHCR and attention to displacement in Asia and the Pacific, including in Afghanistan and Myanmar.

23. The representative of **Denmark** noted that his country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union on behalf of its member States and pointed out that refugee numbers were increasing while humanitarian funding was decreasing, thereby widening the gap and stressing the system and the work of UNHCR. He appreciated leadership efforts to keep member States informed and looked forward to further consultations as the strategy was shaped, noting the projected 20 per cent cut to the 2026 budget. He said that his country remained among the few meeting the 0.7 per cent target and that flexible funding was the best way to enable UNHCR to respond where needs were greatest. He encouraged all donors to join the Global Refugee Forum multi-stakeholder pledge on quality funding, co-led with Nordic and other partners. He urged full engagement in the United Nations and Humanitarian Reset reform processes, reaffirmed his country's commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and called for more investment in local

actors and stronger support to host communities to enable refugee self-reliance and inclusion. He welcomed the efficiency gains achieved through inter-agency cooperation and procurement, and urged attention to the impacts of climate change and the consistent application of an age, gender, and diversity approach.

24. The representative of **Canada** acknowledged the scale of financial and operational challenges and appreciated the emphasis on safeguarding core mandate activities and operational agility through restructuring. She requested additional information on prioritization and allocation criteria and how objectives stemming from the Humanitarian Reset reform initiative focused on the most acute needs as operations downsized. She stated that development actors and national governments played key roles in addressing root causes and implementing long-term solutions; however, in high-risk or conflict-affected settings, they faced access constraints, making the protection mandate of UNHCR essential. She encouraged a complementary, context-sensitive approach, with UNHCR focusing its delivery on areas of comparative advantage while leveraging partnerships for sustainable solutions and alignment with national systems and development frameworks. She urged coherence, transparency and preservation of comparative advantage in protection and emergency response, supported diversification of the donor base and deeper engagement with the private sector, financial institutions and regional bodies and reaffirmed her country's readiness to work alongside UNHCR to keep the system anchored in protection outcomes and the most acute needs.

25. The representative of **the Sudan** noted that her country aligned itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Africa Group, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab Group. She pointed out that the proposed 2026 programme budget of \$8.5 billion represented a 20 per cent reduction at a time when the forcibly displaced and stateless population was projected to reach 136 million, including nearly twelve million Sudanese internally displaced and more than 3.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers in neighbouring countries. She said that her country remained one of Africa's largest refugee-hosting countries while enduring the most severe displacement crisis in its history, noting pre-war hosting of over one million refugees and subsequent mass outflows since April 2023. She said that more than 1.3 million Sudanese had voluntarily returned to their areas of origin after government gains, demonstrating a strong desire to go home, but said sustaining returns required urgent medium- and long-term development support to rebuild, rehabilitate services and expand livelihoods. She described catastrophic conditions in western regions of the country, including sieges, blocked aid and starvation tactics, and cited widespread gender-based violence by militias. She said reductions must not fall disproportionately on life-saving work, called for increased support for safe, dignified and voluntary return and reintegration and stressed that root causes had to be addressed or needs would escalate. She urged predictable, flexible and equitable funding in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

26. The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** noted that his country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. He welcomed the High Commissioner's recent visit, pointing out that direct engagement with major host countries improves planning, advocacy and resource mobilization. He said his country had shouldered one of the heaviest and longest refugee responsibilities despite severe economic pressure, including unilateral coercive measures that impede humanitarian support. He cautioned that shrinking international support and liquidity shortfalls have shifted attention to sudden emergencies, while protracted situations, such as that in Afghanistan, were often neglected. He noted the 20 per cent cut to the 2026 programme budget and that his country's allocation remained roughly \$140 million despite far higher national spending, and considered the funding for the Level 2 emergency in Afghanistan inadequate. He said only 16 per cent of requirements for his country were met by July, with a \$117 million gap and sharp donor reductions. He called for dedicated emergency funding and investment in durable solutions, saying voluntary repatriation must be the preferred solution in practice.

27. The representative of the **United States of America** welcomed recent budget reductions and structural reforms but said a large gap persists between the approved budget and realistic income. She called the 2026 proposal unrealistic and said repeated overestimation undermines credibility. She urged a disciplined budget based on

prioritization, efficiencies and transparency, showing what UNHCR will stop doing to focus on core mandate activities and lifesaving interventions, including support for refugee returns. She supported consolidation, common United Nations services, a more flexible workforce and strong oversight and fraud prevention. She said all member States must share the burden, and the donor base should expand to emerging economies and the private sector. She opposed any expansion of mandate that could undermine State sovereignty and asked UNHCR to demonstrate genuine prioritization and commitment to reform.

28. The representative of **France** noted that her country aligned with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union on behalf of its member States. She expressed support for reform guided by efficiency and coherence with the overall United Nations and the Humanitarian Reset reform initiatives, in consultation with States and local partners. She welcomed stronger synergies with IOM while respecting each organization's mandate and paid tribute to staff facing difficult changes. She reaffirmed political support for multilateral action and for the Global Compact on Refugees, while encouraging diversification of funding. She said the December meeting in Geneva would be an important milestone and an opportunity to highlight her country's initiative for women and girls.

29. The representative of **Kenya** said only 5 per cent of funding was unearmarked as of 31 August 2025, which was deeply concerning and expressed support for appeals for unearmarked, predictable and flexible funding in the spirit of good humanitarian donorship. She noted a projected 62.9 per cent gap for 2025, while persons of concern could reach 136 million in 2026, and asked why the 2026 budget is \$2 billion lower. She stated that Impact Area 4 on solutions remained the least resourced in her region and called for balanced financing of solutions across all regions to alleviate pressure on hosts and facilitate voluntary returns and reintegration. She stated that sustainable responses must not impose additional burdens on host countries and requested that attention be given to climate action within the mandate of UNHCR. She underlined that humanitarian funding should follow the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

30. The representative of **South Africa** noted that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Africa Group. She noted with appreciation the recognition of the generous contributions made by donor countries, while requesting that future presentations also quantify the significant in-kind contributions made by hosting States. She said that reflecting these contributions alongside donor support would provide a more comprehensive picture of collective efforts and ensure that the roles of both donors and hosts were acknowledged equitably. She emphasized that while 2026 would be a challenging year for UNHCR and refugee-hosting States, it was vital to remember that behind every provision of refugee law stood a human life whose dignity and survival depended on collective courage to uphold the principles of international protection. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to international protection and to fulfilling its responsibilities in that regard. She stressed that ensuring international protection required sustained funding and inclusive development to restore human dignity. At a time of limited resources, she highlighted the importance of rethinking strategies that address the root causes of forced displacement and said this could only be achieved through the commitment of countries of origin. She recalled that the High Commissioner had committed to arranging a meeting between Southern African countries and UNHCR Regional Directors to discuss the implications of closing the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, but said that no communication had yet been received regarding this matter. She stressed that such meetings were essential to strengthen transparency and trust. While restructuring might lead to efficiencies, she expressed concern about its impact on operational support at the country level. She underlined the need to consider the effects of the closure on national asylum systems, including efforts to address backlogs in refugee status determination. She warned that the closure of dedicated regional oversight and budgetary support could exacerbate existing challenges and place disproportionate pressure on already overstretched national institutions. She said that the shift toward nationally integrated models must take into account her country's complex socio-economic landscape, marked by high unemployment, persistent inequality and service delivery gaps. These conditions created competition over scarce and unevenly distributed resources and could undermine social cohesion and erode the principles of protection and inclusion that UNHCR sought to uphold. She added that the success of a route-based approach in South Africa depended not only on policy alignment but also on

meaningful investment in local capacity and community engagement. Without robust support mechanisms, South Africa could face constraints in providing international protection. She stressed that transitioning responsibilities to national systems could not be treated solely as a cost-saving measure, but must be accompanied by sustained technical, financial and diplomatic support to ensure that protection was not only preserved but strengthened.

31. The representative of **Uganda** noted that her country aligned itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Africa Group and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. She noted that after four years of engaging in this file, the discussions felt like *déjà vu*, with the only difference being the change in politics and priorities by donors, not by host countries. She thanked the Director of External Relations for her visit to Uganda and for the On the Brink report which highlighted her country's plight. She urged honesty and called this the only forum for resolving issues to ensure a smooth Executive Committee session, particularly as it was the High Commissioner's last governance meeting. Turning to the new Department of Sustainable Responses, she said that her country was already implementing the very approaches promoted by UNHCR and invited the Director of External Relations to corroborate these efforts based on her recent visit. She stressed, however, that the budget did not reflect these priorities in practice, with limited allocations for empowerment or livelihood opportunities in her country, raising concerns that commitments remained rhetorical rather than action-oriented. She noted remarks made earlier regarding reductions in Europe and the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region and said she struggled to understand cuts in a region where caseloads and workloads had grown substantially. She cautioned that such reductions reinforced the perception that most of the UNHCR budget was spent on administrative costs and salaries rather than on direct support to persons of concern. She acknowledged that protection work was personnel-driven but stressed that counselling on gender-based violence alone could not reduce dependency without investment in opportunities that foster self-reliance. She said the organization could only attract and convince new donors if it demonstrated that the Office was an institution for all and not one perceived as belonging to "a select few." She added that representation in senior management told an important part of the story. She said that the senior-management figures shared by UNHCR did not match the table provided to delegations as of 1 September and requested clarification. She underscored that equal and equitable geographic representation was essential, noting that while the United States had 42 senior managers, France 35, Canada 30, Italy 31, the United Kingdom 27 and Germany 21, the Netherlands (Kingdom of the) 11, the top host countries were scarcely represented: Iran had 0, Uganda 4, Colombia 2, Mexico 1, Sudan 3, Chad 1 and Turkey 6. Kenya, with 19, was the only African country with a notable presence. She reiterated the need for transparency in order to build trust and attract new donors. She stressed the importance of ensuring that everyone had a role to play and of demonstrating that UNHCR was not an institution reserved for a few.

32. The representative of **Colombia** noticed that the 63 per cent funding deficit threatened emergency response and the continuity of essential programmes. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility, noting her country's role as a major receiving State. She thanked donors for flexible and unearmarked support and appealed for more. She asked that countries of the Global South be fully involved in strategic allocation discussions and sought technical and financial partnerships. She echoed the point made by the representative of Uganda regarding the representativeness of senior management, noting inequities affecting Latin America and Africa.

33. The representative of the **United Republic of Tanzania** noted that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Africa Group. She thanked top donors, unearmarked funding contributors and private donors and welcomed the visit by the UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection. She asked how alternatives such as international and national United Nations Volunteers and service contracts were being used to retain staff whose fixed-term or temporary posts ended, and recommended prioritizing these posts for affected staff before external recruitment. She expressed concern over the share of administrative costs and the low representation of host countries in senior management, noting more than two hundred D1 and D2 posts. She proposed further nationalization of eligible posts, stronger capacity building for local actors to reduce costs and ensure the capacity of first responders and a review of the need for both a Representative and a Deputy Representative in all country offices. She asked how One

United Nations joint planning was being carried out to the maximum extent possible and how duplication with other agencies was avoided.

34. The representative of **Ethiopia** noted that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Africa Group. She asked how resources were allocated across emergency response, protection, solutions and resilience and how responses would remain sustainable while addressing new influxes. She called for innovative, efficient approaches that deliver results for refugees and host communities, noting new arrivals from South Sudan and the Sudan into fragile areas. She urged a stronger emergency response, together with investments that build resilience and balanced allocations between immediate needs and durable solutions. She highlighted the Global Compact on Refugees pathways and sought clarity on financial and technical investment to advance resettlement, complementary pathways, third-country solutions and voluntary return and reintegration. She said financing should shift to self-reliance and cited her country's pledge of 10,000 hectares for refugee settlements, calling for collaboration and investment in infrastructure and markets. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and close cooperation with UNHCR.

35. The representative of **Mexico** welcomed efforts to diversify funding, including through the private sector, and expressed concern about the widening gaps between needs and resources. She appealed to donors to maintain or increase their contributions, especially those that are flexible and unearmarked, and noted that her country will increase its contribution compared to previous years. She welcomed the transition towards sustainable responses and support to national development responses in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, requesting further information on the implications for the Americas and on capacity building for authorities and civil society. She welcomed the emphasis on age and gender equality, on meaningful refugee participation, including with women-led organizations, and asked for more information on expenditure, staffing plans, periodic reporting and implementation of the Joint Inspection Unit recommendations.

36. The representative of **Germany** said that his country faced an unprecedented funding crisis while hosting more than 3.4 million refugees. He acknowledged difficult decisions and welcomed differentiated prioritization and capacity adjustments rather than across-the-board cuts. He urged planning and allocations to stay aligned with the core mandate of UNHCR and encouraged close coordination with development partners to enable transitions to development-centred responses in protracted displacement. He said prioritization must align with the Humanitarian Reset and United Nations reform initiatives and emphasized complementarity across humanitarian coordination mechanisms and humanitarian-development-peace nexus approaches.

37. The representative of the **Republic of Korea** reaffirmed her country's commitment to ensuring UNHCR can continue its work and welcomed the focus on core mandates of protection and solutions. She cited support for safe and voluntary returns from Afghanistan, Myanmar and Uganda, noted increased private contributions from her country and welcomed diversification of the donor base and the organization's participation in the United Nations and the Humanitarian Reset reform initiatives. She underlined the importance of solidarity and urged continued communication with all member States.

38. The representative of **Belgium** noted that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union on behalf of its member States and expressed deep concern about the record gap between needs and funding. Reaffirming her country's support with flexible core multi-year funding, she called on others to follow. She noted that UNHCR must do less with less, commended the organization's restructuring efforts and encouraged transparency on decisions regarding budget, staffing and operations. She welcomed the prioritization of protection, life-saving operations and emergencies and urged the organization not to lose sight of the empowerment of women and girls. She asked how tasks would be transitioned to partners and requested more information on the place of sustainable solutions in planning. She reaffirmed her country's support for the Global Compact on Refugees and asked for more insight into the needs-driven budget.

39. The representative of **Norway** echoed concerns about financial pressure on budgets for 2025 and 2026 and called for bold measures by the humanitarian system, donors and

governments. She supported the Humanitarian Reset and United Nations reform initiatives towards a simplified, efficient, and gender-responsive system, and stated that defending multilateralism and international law must be the primary goal of reform. She noted the budget reduction proposed for 2026, especially in Europe and the Middle East, while the 2025 funding gap remained at about 63 per cent. She stressed the importance of flexible, predictable funding and affirmed her country's support for unearmarked contributions. She noted that by 2026, about 4,000 positions will have been cut, making it essential to increase efficiency through digitalization and inter-agency cooperation. She underlined the importance of accountability, strong internal controls and prevention of corruption and sexual exploitation, and supported a shift to sustainable, locally anchored solutions in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. She welcomed a strong focus on protection, including prevention of gender-based violence and protection of refugees who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or with other diverse identities and other vulnerable groups and urged inclusive and transparent restructuring.

40. The representative of **Malawi** said that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Africa Group. She noted the closure of the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa and said that the budget lacked clear information on resource allocations for Southern Africa, and asked whether the decision improved the organization's financial standing. She requested details on amounts factored into the budget for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region to cover Southern Africa. She further asked about the geographic distribution of human resources and called for concrete action so that the organization reflected United Nations principles, noting that countries like hers had no representation in decision-making positions. She urged continued delivery on the mandate of the organization and stressed burden-sharing while reaffirming readiness to keep borders open.

41. The representative of **Iraq** noted that her country aligned itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Arab Group and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. She appreciated efforts to adapt to increasing crises and a reduced 2026 budget. She condemned practices by Israel in the Gaza Strip. Returning to the budget, she noted with appreciation the attention paid to local integration, resettlement and voluntary return and greater reliance on local actors and co-planning with United Nations entities and other organizations, and encouraged the restructuring to focus on the most vulnerable. She outlined her country's efforts in 2024 to support voluntary return, including income-generating projects, the integration of women and persons with disabilities into social protection, cash assistance and livelihood support, rehabilitation for survivors of gender-based violence, the issuance of IDs, and community awareness building. She said a draft refugee law was near completion to regulate refugee affairs and ensure services on an equal basis. She considered the 2026 programme an adaptation to new developments, but expressed concern at a 62 per cent cut for her country, which would affect operations.

42. The **Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (UNHCR)** thanked delegations and said some answers regarding item 3(b) would be included in her upcoming presentation. She acknowledged the need for detailed information on prioritization, planning, allocation and transparency, noting that rapid trade-offs amid a large funding gap make real-time reporting difficult, but that UNHCR aims to share as much as possible. She said choices had been difficult and differed between contexts. She reported reduced administrative costs, fewer international positions, more national posts and increased partnerships with national and local actors. She outlined the programme approach, which involved operations prioritizing what was most urgent in each context, considering the displacement type and duration, national system capacity and the scale and vulnerability of arrivals. She said expenditure tables illustrated the prioritization as of mid-year. She rejected the view that administrative expenditure was high, explaining that about 75 to 80 per cent goes to programme delivery, including staff directly providing services and implementing partners, with a rising share to national and community-based organizations, including refugee- and women-led groups. She said programme support covered technical leadership and enabling functions, and that the budget for management and administration remained modest. She noted that not all countries from the former Regional Bureau for Southern Africa moved to the Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes; some moved to the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa. She said that about 40 to 48 per cent of

resources each year were spent in countries with declared emergencies and that UNHCR reallocated funds and staff through emergency deployments and used global stockpiles. She reiterated that flexible funding and the programme approach enabled reallocation to avoid duplication.

43. The **Director of the Division of External Relations (UNHCR)** thanked delegations for their comments and highlighted progress in Islamic philanthropy. She noted the growth of the Global Islamic Refugee Fund, with first disbursements to Chad, Egypt and Libya, supported by the Islamic Development Bank, King Salman Relief, Islamic Relief USA and private partners. She explained that the Humanitarian Reset reform initiative preceded and fed into the UN80 reform initiative. She outlined the simplification from 15 to 8 clusters and the deprioritization of eight humanitarian operations, from 28 to 20. She emphasized continued investment in these reforms and echoed calls to expand multi-year donor pledges on flexible funding.

44. The **Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)** thanked the delegations that spoke and stressed the urgency of the financial situation. She noted divergent guidance from delegations and urged reaching a common ground. She emphasized that UNHCR could not meet all needs and required prioritization and clarity on what to stop doing, given the financial reality. She underlined the importance of focusing on emergency response, protection and solutions, while acknowledging painful trade-offs. She highlighted austerity measures, monitoring of liquidity, reductions in administrative costs and increased reliance on national staff and local partners. She stressed the need for solidarity, geographic diversity in staffing and further dialogue with member States on budget structure and mandates.

*The meeting rose at 13:11 p.m.*

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