



General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 January 2012
English
Original: French

Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Sixty-second session

Summary record of the 650th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 4 October 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Badr.....(Egypt)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

Statement by Ms. Angelina Jolie, Goodwill Ambassador

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Executive Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Andressen Guimaraes** (Portugal) said that Portugal, which had instituted its resettlement programme in 2007, welcomed the expansion of resettlement programmes and new initiatives to close the gap between global resettlement needs and the number of places offered. It also welcomed the efforts made to bring long-term refugee situations to a close and supported initiatives aimed at strengthening self-reliance and local integration. The Government of Portugal had recently helped UNHCR to organize a seminar in Madeira which had been held in September 2011 in the framework of the Confidence-Building Measures Programme for Western Sahara.

2. The humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa was a good example of how vulnerable populations were to potential causes of displacement besides conflict, such as climate change and food and energy insecurity. Portugal supported the consideration of new forms of cooperation among humanitarian actors, the improved delineation, where necessary, of the roles of humanitarian agencies and the elimination of potential gaps in international law in order to address new challenges. As the United Nations body primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should play an important role in monitoring forced displacement.

3. The State noted with concern the alarming rates of sexual and gender-based violence among refugee populations and called on UNHCR to strengthen the implementation of measures to prevent such violence. It supported the 2012–2013 biennial programme budget and urged UNHCR to broaden its donor base, including in the private sector. Lastly, it intended to join the statelessness conventions in the near future and was considering making further pledges in the field of refugee protection.

4. **Mr. Lockhart** (New Zealand) said that the situation with regard to financial constraints and increasing protection demands had not improved in 2011. New Zealand had continued to contribute to UNHCR responses in 2011, including during the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, and would pursue its work with the organization in the framework of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. His Government worked cooperatively with States and UNHCR to find durable solutions for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. It was concerned about the absence of a decision by the Government of Bhutan to accept the repatriation of refugees on humanitarian grounds, but would nevertheless continue to welcome Bhutanese refugees under its refugee quota programme.

5. He welcomed the report on the UNHCR resource-mobilization strategy and looked forward to learning about the level of resources allocated and the outcome of private sector fundraising efforts. On structural and management change processes, he welcomed UNHCR plans to link financial and output data in order to allow for the evaluation of operational effectiveness and to strengthen accountability. The note on international protection (A/AC.96/1098) indicated that UNHCR had begun to explore the possibility of refugees accessing migration opportunities, including through employment and education schemes. He looked forward to learning more about that possibility, including about the potential social and economic impact on host populations and countries. He welcomed the progress made by UNHCR on ensuring that women were represented in camp leadership and decision-making forums and encouraged UNHCR to continue its efforts to protect children and adolescents.

6. **Ms. Athanassaidou** (Greece) said that, due to its geographical location, Greece was faced with a mass influx of illegal immigrants that was disproportionate to the country's size and financial resources. In 2010, over 90 per cent of undocumented immigrants, for the

most part asylum-seekers, who had been trying to enter the European Union had been apprehended at the Greek border. As a result, Greek asylum procedures were under considerable pressure. Greece was nevertheless taking all necessary steps to provide appropriate protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, particularly in the context of a common European asylum system. It was undertaking a reform of its asylum management system and pursuing efforts to establish screening centres for the purposes of status determination and the delivery of basic humanitarian aid to illegal immigrants. The European Union legal framework on asylum was an important sign of progress, however, its efficacy was diluted because of the lack of harmonization of national asylum procedures and the high costs of implementing the framework arrangements. Her Government was concerned about the Dublin II Regulation, whose practical application had proved problematic and needed to be re-evaluated promptly. She wished to propose that: the speed and efficiency of status determination procedures should be improved; a binding mechanism should be established for the transfer of asylum-seekers in vulnerable groups; asylum applications should be examined jointly; a joint European resettlement programme should be created; primary screening procedures should be put in place in the main transit countries; and increased financial support should be provided for the settlement of asylum and migration issues through, for example, the establishment of a migration and asylum fund.

7. **Mr. El Din Ibrahim** (Egypt) said that his country had received more than 500,000 people fleeing the Libyan conflict, and cooperation with UNHCR and other international partners had been needed in order to deal with the situation. In the west of the country, many people were awaiting third-country resettlement, and several countries, notably Sweden, had quickly come forward in response to an international appeal. Following a campaign launched by Egypt on help for Somalia, donations of US\$ 10 million had been received, medical teams had been dispatched to the field from the very outset of the crisis and camps had been set up to distribute food and medicines.

8. **Mr. Nimrat** (Jordan) said that Jordan had sent food and provided medical assistance to all the regions that had recently been beset by crises. There was a vital need to strengthen coordination between UNHCR, national organizations and international organizations and to establish a rapid warning and information exchange mechanism. For decades, Jordan had played host to Palestine refugees; it had also taken in Iraqi refugees. It looked to the international community to bear its responsibilities, particularly by observing the principle of burden sharing.

9. **Mr. Bayramov** (Turkmenistan) said that his country had acceded to nearly all the main international humanitarian-law instruments, most recently to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in 2011. In August 2005, 13,245 persons, 9,400 of them refugees, had acquired Turkmen nationality. Moreover, 3,053 persons, 1,800 of them refugees, had been issued with a residence permit for Turkmenistan. The Turkmen Government and the UNHCR office in Turkmenistan worked together on three main issues: statelessness, adapting refugee legislation and managing exceptional circumstances involving sudden inflows of refugees. The naturalization, in summer 2011, of 1,590 stateless persons who had been residing permanently in Turkmenistan had set a precedent under international law. With a view to sharing its experiences, Turkmenistan would hold an international conference in Achgabat in 2012 for all interested parties.

10. **Ms. Chohan** (South Africa) said that South Africa remained the main destination country for asylum-seekers. Some were fleeing from statelessness or political persecution, but many came seeking better prospects. In that context, the Government of South Africa had undertaken a wide-ranging overhaul of its legislation in order to secure the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees and it had developed a policy on separating economic migrants from asylum-seekers. It had begun to issue identity documents to Zimbabwean

nationals, who represented the largest economic migrant population in the country. To date, it had issued permits to just over 145,000 persons. The countries of the Southern African Development Community needed to adopt a regional strategy on migration while simultaneously entering into bilateral agreements with one another.

11. In November 2011, South Africa would be hosting the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. As countries grappled with the challenge of reaching a legally binding agreement on climate change, the impact of changing climatic conditions on people's lives, including agricultural production and food security, was undeniable. South Africa looked forward to welcoming delegations of the world to attend with a view to finding sustainable solutions to that global crisis.

12. **Mr. Chebihi** (Algeria) said that all countries had a moral duty and a responsibility to receive those fleeing persecution and conflict and to create the right conditions to allow them to return home in dignity. Algeria rejected all attempts to exploit or politicize humanitarianism and continued to provide refugees with protection and assistance. It was working on an asylum bill that was in full conformity with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. It had been assisting the refugees at Tindouf in Western Sahara for over 30 years. Moreover, it had provided considerable humanitarian assistance to those displaced as a result of the Libyan conflict. It had received some 5,000 displaced persons at the border, registered them, regularized their consular status, supplied their basic needs and planned their repatriation. It had also evacuated a thousand foreign nationals by sea from Benghazi and Tripoli. Lastly, it had helped Tunisia to deal with a large influx of persons fleeing the fighting.

13. In response to emergency appeals by international organizations, Algeria had decided to contribute US\$ 10 million to provide humanitarian aid to countries in the Horn of Africa where thousands had been displaced by drought, famine and food insecurity. Initially, it planned to organize an airlift of 700 tons of products for Somali refugees at the Dadaab camp in Kenya. Seven million dollars worth of food aid would then be provided to the populations worst affected by the drought in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Uganda.

14. **Mr. Strohal** (Austria) said that he wished to congratulate UNHCR on the statelessness campaign that it had launched in August 2011. Although progress had been made on the issue, the high number of the world's stateless people underscored the importance of raising awareness of their plight and of offering them assistance. Austria encouraged UNHCR to pursue its activities to assist women and children who were at high risk of becoming stateless. For UNHCR, 2011 had been a challenging year, with situations of massive displacement in Africa and the Arab world and the crisis in the Horn of Africa, where environmental or climate-induced phenomena had exacerbated situations of displacement. In that connection, his Government commended UNHCR for strengthening its emergency preparedness and encouraged it to further develop its partnerships with international, national, regional and local partners.

15. There had been an alarming rise in the number of internally displaced persons in 2011, to more than 27 million people, and his Government encouraged UNHCR to continue its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs, as only concerted action would be conducive to delivering effective assistance to internally displaced persons and to gradually strengthening the legal protection framework for that particularly vulnerable group. Lastly, Austria shared the High Commissioner's concern about the shrinking of humanitarian space and encouraged UNHCR to use all means available to ensure better protection of civilians and aid workers during armed conflicts.

16. **Mr. Hassan** (Yemen) said that his country received many refugees from the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, and from the Middle East. It did what it could to resolve that difficult humanitarian situation, even though it was facing its own problems with internal displacement triggered by violent clashes in some towns and having to manage camps set up in the wake of riots in the governorate of Sa`dah. The number of displaced persons now stood at 400,000. Yemen urgently needed humanitarian assistance to deal with displaced persons and refugees. Given the Somali refugee situation, it called on the United Nations to bear its responsibilities for restoring peace and security in Somalia by helping the Somali Government to create conditions conducive to the safe return of the refugees.

17. Yemen also received thousands of irregular migrants fleeing economic problems and the drought in the Horn of Africa. It therefore reiterated its appeal to the international community for help in overcoming the economic and humanitarian problems that it was confronting.

18. **Mr. Guterres** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he wished to thank Portugal for its help with the organization of the seminar in Madeira on the Confidence-Building Measures Programme for Western Sahara and shared the concerns expressed about sexual and gender-based violence against refugees. He commended New Zealand on the close cooperation that it had established with UNHCR, the quality of its asylum system and its commitment to improving its resettlement programme. He welcomed the efforts made by countries in the framework of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. He had visited Greece, where he had been able to see the situation that the country was facing as an entry point for some 80 per cent of asylum-seekers in Europe. He commended the Government on its willingness to establish an effective asylum system and assured it of his organization's support. He took note of the proposals made by Greece on reform of the European asylum system developed under the Dublin II Regulation.

19. He welcomed the open door policy pursued by Egypt and the countries in the region during the Libyan crisis, which had helped to stave off a humanitarian disaster. UNHCR was working to resettle the refugees and hoped to be able to count on cooperation with the Egyptian Government in order to improve the refugee protection system in Egypt. He commended Jordan on its exemplary partnership with UNHCR, its generosity towards Palestine and Iraqi refugees and its open door policy. He was pleased to note that Turkmenistan had approved a plan at the end of 2010 on the reduction of statelessness and that it had embarked on a process of registration and naturalization of stateless persons.

20. He was conscious of the pressure that receiving large numbers of asylum applications placed on South Africa and assured the Government that UNHCR would help it to maintain its refugee protection system. He hoped that the participants at the 17th Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change would focus on the humanitarian consequences of climate change. He congratulated Algeria on keeping its borders open during the Libyan crisis and offering protection to large numbers of refugees. He had taken note of the main issues raised by the representative of Austria, particularly of the need to expand partnerships and to protect humanitarian space. Lastly, he expressed solidarity with the Yemeni people at a critical time in which many persons, particularly in the south of the country, had been displaced. It was encouraging that, notwithstanding its political, economic and environmental difficulties, Yemen remained a protected space for Somali refugees.

21. **Monsignor Tomasi** (Holy See) said that, with the drought and conflict in the Horn of Africa, which had sparked large refugee flows, and the protracted refugee situations in the Middle East and elsewhere, it was clear that the protection task of UNHCR was far from being completed. Recalling that one of the objectives set out in the preamble of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was to assure refugees the widest possible

exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms, he said it was regrettable that millions of refugees in many regions of the world were still unable to enjoy those rights. He was concerned that the number of cases of detention of asylum-seekers and other persons in need of protection was rising and that detention was no longer used as a last resort and for exceptional cases. The policy of self-settlement outside camps had met with some success and should be tried on a larger scale, because refugees in camps were not necessarily more likely to repatriate than those who self-settled.

22. The Holy See was concerned that many refugees and asylum-seekers were trapped in situations of destitution and were excluded from access to social services. National and local authorities should continue to assume responsibility for those refugees, following the example of UNHCR, which had launched initiatives to assist urban refugees. Thousands of young people from the Middle East and other places were arriving in Europe without a visa, challenging the protection systems of the countries that they crossed. Many were unaccompanied minors, who must be protected and treated first and foremost as children. Detention was inappropriate for such minors, as it meant that they ended up being put together with adults. Children's applications for asylum must be given higher priority and the same determination procedures should apply to minors with applications who had become adults in the interim. Lastly, care should be taken to prevent minors who were taken abroad under false pretences from being exploited.

23. **Ms. Ibrahima** (Togo) said that she endorsed the statement made by the Group of African States at the 648th meeting and that her country, which had joined the UNHCR Executive Committee in April 2011, had ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa of 1969. In 2000, the Government of Togo had adopted a law on refugee status and, in May 2011, it had ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. In line with the commitments that it had made, Togo upheld the principle of non-refoulement and assisted upwards of 21,000 refugees of 14 different nationalities. Following the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, tens of thousands of Ivorians had taken refuge in Togo, and the Government had done a great deal to provide them with assistance, particularly in the areas of housing, security, regularization of status, education and employment. Out of 7,824 Ivorian refugees who had initially been registered, 4,761 were still in Togo, 2,617 of them at the Avepozo camp. The Government, in cooperation with UNHCR, was planning to develop a second site exclusively for former combatants among the refugee population. As for Togolese refugees who were still in neighbouring countries and in Europe, she suggested that UNHCR should apply the cessation clause provided for under the 1951 Convention, since the climate of peace in Togo was favourable to refugee returns.

24. **Mr. Demiralp** (Turkey) said that the events in North Africa and the Middle East had again tested UNHCR and he welcomed the cooperation between Turkey and the High Commissioner's Office in those regions. The Government was particularly concerned about the humanitarian crisis that had struck Somalia after 20 years of civil war and called for emergency aid to be supplied to the Somali population. Turkey had launched its own national campaign to assist Somalis directly affected by the drought and the famine. While hosting the emergency meeting on Somalia held by the Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on 17 August 2011 in Istanbul, his Government had sought to draw attention to the most vulnerable population groups in Somalia, particularly refugees. In conclusion, he welcomed the structural reforms undertaken by UNHCR which had resulted in headquarters costs being reduced from 14 to 9 per cent of total expenditure and staff costs from 41 to 27 per cent.

25. **Mr. Malinga** (Uganda) said that his country hosted 133,115 refugees and 23,362 asylum-seekers, mostly from neighbouring countries. Tripartite agreements were in place

with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Kenya and the Sudan, and negotiations with Burundi on the signing of an agreement were under way. The repatriation to the Sudan of over 80 per cent of refugees had been successful. The process of repatriation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo had yet to start, yet new refugees had arrived from that country. Since 2004, some 6,000 Rwandan refugees had been repatriated, but close to 16,000 were still in Uganda. In 2008, the Government of Uganda had developed a US\$ 24 million rehabilitation programme for 2009–2013. UNHCR was tasked with leading the fundraising efforts, but only US\$ 1 million had been raised to date. He called on UNHCR to urgently address the fundraising problem. The issue of protracted refugee caseloads, particularly those involving Rwandan and Congolese nationals, presented a challenge for Uganda, and the Government had embarked on dialogue with the Governments concerned and UNHCR to find durable solutions to deal with refugees who no longer had ties with their countries of origin.

26. **Mr. Anwary** (Observer for Afghanistan) said that, in less than one decade, 5.7 million Afghan refugees had returned to their homeland after years of exile in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Those people made up 25 per cent of the current population of Afghanistan. In 2011, nearly 50,000 registered refugees had been repatriated from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The situation presented challenges, however. Around 40 per cent of all returnees continued to have a lower living standard than their compatriots and struggled to find housing, get medical care and have their children educated. Sustainable reintegration was difficult to achieve but was crucial for the country's stability and development. More than 2.9 million registered Afghan refugees were still living in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Afghan Government was working with those countries and with UNHCR to pave the way for the refugees' return, but growing insecurity in some parts of the country and unfavourable socio-economic conditions had slowed down the process. The Government intended to work with Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran to put in place a system to manage the return of undocumented Afghan refugees who had no means of making a living. Owing to lack of security, more than 160,000 people had been forcibly displaced in Afghanistan in the previous eight months. The Government was grateful to the international humanitarian agencies for helping those people and to the Government of Japan for offering to host an international conference in early 2012 with the Iranian and Pakistani Governments to discuss a multi-year strategy for resolving the Afghan refugee situation.

27. **Mr. Halilovic** (Observer for Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that approximately 2.2 million people had fled their country during the 1992 war, a million of them finding refuge abroad and another million being internally displaced. Moreover, nearly 500,000 homes, or almost half of all housing units in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had been partially or completely destroyed. The agreement on refugees and displaced persons annexed to the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement established the right of displaced persons to return home. More than a million people had since returned, including almost half a million people from minority groups. The assistance provided had primarily been designed to support the sustainability of the return process. Some 200,000 properties had been repossessed by rights holders and over 320,000 housing units had been rebuilt. Significant challenges remained, however. To respond to them, in 2010 Bosnia and Herzegovina had adopted a revised strategy to meet the urgent needs of more than 105,000 internally displaced persons, refugees and people affected by the conflict. Bosnia and Herzegovina furthermore continued to receive thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers, predominantly from neighbouring countries. As part of efforts to find durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons in the region, the Government had established cooperation arrangements with Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia and planned to hold a donors conference with the three countries in order to prevent a joint regional programme. The support of the

international donor community was essential, as obtaining financial resources would be one of the most important challenges.

28. **Mr. Bhattari** (Observer for Nepal) recalled that Nepal had been host to more than 100,000 refugees from Bhutan over the past two decades but efforts to resolve that humanitarian issue through negotiations with Bhutan had stalled, because Bhutan had failed to implement agreed decisions. Not a single refugee had been allowed to return home. The Government of Nepal nevertheless remained committed to finding a solution and looked forward to an early resumption of negotiations. In 2007, Nepal had welcomed the generous offers of the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Norway, New Zealand, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of places for third-country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees.

29. **Ms. Arango** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), said that solidarity was the main driver behind regional initiatives to assist refugees and asylum-seekers. Children, adolescents, women and the fight against sexual violence were priority concerns for GRULAC. Many countries of the region were taking steps to ratify the conventions and protocols on refugees and stateless persons and to strengthen their national legal frameworks and provide humanitarian assistance to those in need.

30. Speaking on behalf of Colombia, she thanked the UNHCR office in Colombia, which worked closely with various national institutions, in particular to provide technical assistance at different stages of displacement. In Ipiales (Colombia), in late September 2011, the foreign ministers of Colombia and Ecuador respectively had announced the launch of a joint plan of action to identify which of the Colombian refugees in Ecuador wished to remain in Ecuador and which ones wanted to return home. At the Ipiales meeting, the Government of Colombia had pledged to contribute US\$ 500,000 to UNHCR and US\$ 200,000 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support the sustainable return of the Colombian refugees.

31. **Mr. Morales** (Ecuador) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of GRULAC and to reaffirm his Government's commitment to ratifying the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness quickly. With 56,000 refugees, 98 per cent of them originally from Colombia, Ecuador had the largest refugee population in the entire region. It was the first country to have incorporated the terms of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees into its legislation. The Government welcomed the strengthened dialogue between Ecuador and Colombia on the subject of Colombian refugees in Ecuador and called on the international community to support the programme on third-country resettlement of refugees. It called on the international community to provide additional financial support for economic, social and vocational integration activities for refugees in Ecuador.

32. **Mr. Bunduku-Latha** (Observer for Gabon) recalled the main stages of the tripartite consultations conducted between Gabon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNHCR since 2011 and explained that thousands of refugees had returned voluntarily to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thousands of others had been given residence status in Gabon and hundreds were waiting to be resettled in a third country. He called for ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and stated that Gabon had contributed US\$ 2.5 million to provide assistance to those facing the threat of famine in the Horn of Africa.

33. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he had taken note of the comments by the representative of the Holy See on detention, unaccompanied minors and the legal limbo in which many stateless people were trapped. He had noted the proposal by the representative of Togo on the cessation clause. Responding to the representative of

Turkey, he said that he welcomed the open door policy that Turkey had pursued during the Syrian crisis and the country's engagement in the Somali crisis. He welcomed the cooperation between UNHCR and the Turkish Red Crescent and the dialogue with the Government on matters such as developing a better asylum system. It was of the utmost importance to involve the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) from the outset in the design of international humanitarian-aid mechanisms.

34. He appreciated the generosity shown by Uganda, which had settled refugees in areas where they were able to live like Ugandans. He called for greater international solidarity and commended the Government of Uganda on its swift completion of a major repatriation exercise in the north of the country. He recognized the need to do more to facilitate the reintegration of returnees in Afghanistan and to make return an attractive option. He pointed out that UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had established a reintegration programme that included community-based development. He assured the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina of UNHCR support for the application of the terms of annex 7 of the Dayton Peace Accord, welcomed the efforts of the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia to devise a joint programme on refugees and displaced persons, and stated that UNHCR would provide assistance at the forthcoming donors conference in order to bring the issue of refugees in the Balkans to a close. While he acknowledged the success of the resettlement programme for Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, he wished to stress that the Bhutanese authorities had a duty to facilitate voluntary repatriation.

35. He said that Latin America had one of the best asylum systems in the world. He welcomed the Mexico Plan of Action and the support that the authorities, institutions and civil society in Colombia gave to internally displaced persons. As in other regions, UNHCR would participate in the tripartite voluntary-return mechanisms. He welcomed the steps taken by Gabon to grant residence status to former Congolese refugees and looked forward to continuing cooperation with the Government of Gabon in addressing refugee issues in the region.

The meeting was suspended at 12.45 p.m. and resumed at 1.10 p.m.

Statement by Ms. Angelina Jolie, Goodwill Ambassador

36. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, before giving the floor to Ms. Jolie, he wished to thank her for serving as his envoy in difficult situations and for agreeing to become his special envoy in some of the world's most difficult situations so as to help to increase the visibility of UNHCR and garner wider international support.

37. **Ms. Jolie** (Goodwill Ambassador) said that refugees' security and welfare were the only measures of success for refugee activities. She commended refugees in extremely vulnerable situations for their courage and incredible resilience. She drew attention to the risks that UNHCR field staff ran, particularly in conflict zones, and called for greater respect for their independence, impartiality and neutrality so as to ensure their safety. She said that, while UNHCR was always having to intervene on new fronts, rich countries were under pressure to reduce the amount they contributed in aid. She hoped that those countries would not fail in their duty towards the most vulnerable. She thanked the countries that hosted refugees and ensured their safety and welfare, notwithstanding the sacrifices involved. From her experience on the ground, particularly her visit to the Dadaab camp in Kenya, she had been struck by the tremendous hope that refugees placed in a brighter and more secure future. In her view, the situation in the Horn of Africa, where 750,000 people could die over the coming four months, was the humanitarian crisis of an entire generation. She urged Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to scale up their efforts in order to help those people.

38. Recounting the visits that she had made to Malta and Tunisia, she recalled the distress of a mother who got on board a makeshift boat with her child knowing that 15,000 people had died trying to make a sea crossing in 2011. She called on all participants at the sixty-second session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to keep in mind the situation of the refugees at Dadaab, the internally displaced in Somalia, young Afghan girls hoping for a brighter future and all those who had perished at sea. They were the *raison d'être* of UNHCR.

39. **The Chairperson** welcomed the commitment shown by Ms. Jolie and said that more should be done, particularly through the media, to raise public awareness of the magnitude of the crisis in Somalia.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.