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Summary record of the 725th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 10 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Delmi..... (Algeria)

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

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

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Lehtiranta** (Finland) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. She welcomed the Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Her country was continuing its resettlement programme and would increase its refugee quota for the coming years. In Finland, the active involvement of both the State and civil society in the integration of refugees was central to the refugee policy and could be considered a best practice. Finland was a party to both statelessness conventions and was engaged in efforts to combat statelessness, with that being one of the aims of the Finnish law on citizenship. She appreciated the Office's commitment to greater inclusion of internally displaced persons in its activities. As the inclusion of persons with disabilities was a priority for her Government, she welcomed the Office's efforts to enhance inclusive humanitarian action. She supported the decentralization and regionalization processes being carried out as part of the Office's transformation. It was important for UNHCR to increase the levels of integrity and accountability in its operations and to share information about suspected cases of mismanagement with its partners in a proactive and timely manner.

2. **Ms. Costa** (Uruguay) said that her country had received over 5,700 applications for refugee status in the first half of 2019, compared to 2,390 in 2017. Uruguay was one of 29 United Nations Member States to participate in UNHCR resettlement programmes. Ten Central American families had been resettled in the country under the rural resettlement programme of 2017; they had been given housing and access to employment and other services to facilitate their rapid integration into Uruguayan society. The programme would be continued to the extent the country's resources allowed. Uruguay had ratified all international instruments on the protection of refugees and stateless persons and acted in a manner consistent with the rules of international humanitarian law. A 2018 law had recognized the right of all persons without a nationality to request and receive protection within the territory of Uruguay. This allowed for recognition of their basic rights and made it possible for them to apply for Uruguayan citizenship. The adoption of the law had made it possible to address the approximately 20 cases of statelessness in the country.

3. **Mr. González-Aller Jurado** (Spain) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its member States. His country, which had had a nationality law even before ratifying the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness so as to ensure that all persons born in Spanish territory had a nationality and the rights that one conferred, supported the #IBelong campaign. An international conference on statelessness in Europe had been held in Spain in April 2019; 34 European countries had participated, with a comprehensive analysis of the situation being carried out and best practices exchanged. Since 2001, the country had had a system that recognized the status of stateless persons, providing them with legal certainty and access to a range of services. The country's location in Southern Europe placed it at the crossroads of Mediterranean and Atlantic migration routes. In 2018, 101,957 migrants had entered Spain on an irregular basis, often in very precarious situations. The number of asylum seekers had increased more than tenfold in five years, rising from 6,000 in 2014 to 80,000 in the first nine months of 2019. In response, the Government had made significant efforts to adapt its institutions and provide the competent authorities with the necessary human and material resources. As the current refugee crisis could not be managed at the national level alone, collaboration with other countries and international organizations was essential. The Government therefore supported the global compact on refugees and the Global Refugee Forum, where it would be a co-sponsor of the group on solutions. Lastly, he wished to draw attention to the situation of refugees affected by protracted conflicts, particularly the Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf, as they ran the risk of being overlooked by donors.

4. **Mr. Mester** (Israel) said that he would be interested in learning more about the High Commissioner's plans regarding decentralization and regionalization, the degree to which authority would be delegated to the field, the anticipated timeline for the relevant changes, and the roles of the Standing Committee and Executive Committee in their implementation. With regard to the work being done to combat sexual exploitation and sexual harassment, his Government had closely studied the reports to be presented during the session,

including the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Inspector General's Office, which indicated that complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse constituted the second largest category of misconduct complaints and complaints of sexual harassment the fifth largest. He encouraged UNHCR to increase its efforts to address those issues. All allegations needed to be handled rapidly, with an investigation of each, leading to prosecution if warranted. Victims needed to be shown that there was a commitment to eradicating such behaviour.

5. **Ms. Mcharek** (Tunisia) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States. Tunisia was a party to the statelessness conventions, which recognized the right to a nationality to be a legally guaranteed basic right. Tunisian nationality could now be transmitted by either parent. The nationality law conferred Tunisian nationality on children born in Tunisia to stateless parents who had been residing in Tunisian territory for more than five years and on children whose parents were unknown. An interministerial meeting on belonging and legal identity, organized in collaboration with UNHCR and the League of Arab States, had been held in Tunisia in February 2018 as part of the #IBelong campaign. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of burden-sharing and solidarity in addressing the refugee crisis. It was pleased to participate in the Global Refugee Forum, which would provide an opportunity to review how commitments undertaken under the global compact on refugees were being implemented, in particular with regard to new opportunities for resettlement and the development of solutions, without focusing solely on financial assistance.

6. **Mr. Torrejón Alcoba** (Observer for the Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his country was a party to the statelessness conventions. Bolivian nationality, which could be acquired under the principles of both *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*, was conferred on children born in the country to foreign nationals, refugees and asylum seekers. Under the law, stateless persons could also apply for nationality; however, no cases of statelessness had been reported in the country. The new Bolivian code on childhood and adolescence guaranteed children and adolescents the full enjoyment of their rights and the right to Bolivian nationality at birth if they were born in Bolivian territory or if they were born abroad to at least one Bolivian parent. The country's civil registration service had developed quick, free procedures to enable all children and adolescents to exercise their right to an identity and filiation. Offices for the registration of newborns had recently been opened in maternity centres and hospitals throughout the country. Birth registration campaigns were being carried out in rural areas, and births could also be registered online. In 2016, the country had implemented a naturalization procedure for refugees and stateless persons in line with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and had lowered naturalization fees by 90 per cent so as to facilitate those individuals' access to a nationality. The Government planned to hold joint training workshops or seminars with UNHCR on statelessness or the status of refugees.

7. **Mr. Baiou** (Observer for Libya) thanked UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration for the assistance provided by their teams on the ground, in difficult and life-threatening conditions, in attending to the needs of civilians and helping to resettle migrants in safe countries. He said that his country also appreciated the assistance offered by the Niger and Rwanda in hosting migrants as part of the resettlement process. Libya faced growing challenges related to voluntary and forced movements of people which had directly affected its ability to meet the needs of migrants and displaced persons. The situation was worsened by the unilateral intervention of some nations in the internal affairs of the country, which fuelled the armed conflict and was the cause of the humanitarian crisis currently affecting hundreds of thousands of people. To keep the situation from deteriorating further, the international community must speak with one voice to stop the war.

8. **Mr. Awoumou** (Cameroon) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States. In connection with the #IBelong campaign, Cameroon had endeavoured to reduce cases of statelessness by, for example, implementing a strategy on civil status registration, developing a national plan on statelessness and holding workshops for civil status registrars on statelessness and nationality. Cameroon continued to offer protection to persons fleeing persecution in their countries of origin. The country currently hosted 384,600 refugees, of whom 286,138 were from the Central African Republic and 94,838 were from Nigeria. He thanked UNHCR for

its assistance and encouraged it to transition its humanitarian projects into community development. With respect to the socio-political tensions existing in the country's North-West and South-West Regions since 2016, the Head of State had recently held a national dialogue aimed at resolving the crisis; that would allow for the return of both internally displaced persons and Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria. The Government and its partners continued to assist persons fleeing Boko Haram attacks and the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions under the emergency humanitarian assistance plan put in place in June 2018. He welcomed the effective implementation of the tripartite agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees living in Cameroon, as well as the agreement concerning refugees from the Central African Republic, which demonstrated the State party's determination to find lasting solutions for the refugees it hosted.

9. **Mr. Brizuela** (Paraguay) said that his country had approved the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons under Act No. 5164 of 12 May 2014 and had deposited its instrument of ratification for that convention on 1 July 2014. The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness had entered into force for Paraguay on 7 September 2012. To ensure that the two conventions were properly implemented, Paraguay had made the necessary changes to its domestic legal system by, inter alia, adopting Act No. 6149/18 on the protection and naturalization of stateless persons, which used the definition of "stateless person" set out in the first article of the 1954 Convention. The Act established statelessness determination procedures and charged the National Commission for Stateless Persons and Refugees (CONARE) with applying them. It also prevented children born abroad to Paraguayan parents from becoming stateless as a result of the laws of the country of birth.

10. Furthermore, in December 2014, Paraguay, together with 28 countries and 3 territories in Latin America and the Caribbean, had adopted the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, in which the signatories reaffirmed their commitment to the eradication of statelessness. The country had also adopted a number of measures to implement actions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014–2024, including a national plan for universal birth registration.

11. **Mr. Dymond** (New Zealand) said that his country was concerned that the Asia and Pacific region was home to 7.7 million persons of concern to UNHCR, including 1.4 million stateless persons. His country, a party to the 1961 Convention, had recently committed to examining whether it should accede to the 1954 Convention; it would complete that process prior to the country's next universal periodic review before the Human Rights Council, which was scheduled for 2023.

12. **Ms. Nguyen** (Observer for Viet Nam) said that, in late 2018, there had been 34,110 stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality in Viet Nam. Between 2009 and 2019, the Government had issued documents to 10,202 individuals, primarily through naturalization, birth registration, the determination of children's nationality and the issuance of certificates of Vietnamese nationality. The country had also engaged in a number of other efforts to address statelessness, including efforts that facilitated the access of stateless persons to naturalization under the relevant laws, raised awareness of nationality laws, and strengthened mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between domestic agencies and agencies of neighbouring countries. The country would continue its efforts to accede to either the 1954 Convention or the 1961 Convention, develop a plan to address statelessness, and improve its domestic policies and laws in that area.

13. **Mr. Karklins** (Latvia) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. Latvia was a party to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and was one of the few European countries to have a special law on stateless persons, which included a precisely defined procedure for determining statelessness. Although Latvia had a relatively small number of stateless persons (171) compared to other countries, it was working to meet their needs effectively by, for example, providing avenues for them to acquire Latvian citizenship. Furthermore, children born in Latvia to stateless parents became Latvians as soon as their births were registered.

14. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by the States and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR. He also welcomed the commitments made with regard to resettlement by Uruguay, Paraguay, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and New Zealand.

15. **Ms. Samate** (Observer for the African Union) said that the African Union aligned itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States. The year 2019, which marked the fiftieth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), had been proclaimed the “Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa”. It was worrying to note that the funding allocated to protracted refugee situations was still highly inadequate and solidarity with refugees was declining throughout the world. Refugees needed to be included in the national development programmes and plans prepared in connection with implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

16. The African Union commended countries, such as Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda, the Niger and Rwanda, that had developed progressive policies and laws to protect and assist refugees; the African countries that had set up comprehensive refugee response frameworks and taken promising steps to implement the global compact on refugees; South Sudan for having ratified the Kampala Convention; and the Niger for having adopted a domestic law on protecting and assisting internally displaced persons. A draft protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights specifically addressing the right to a nationality and the eradication of statelessness could be adopted by the Assembly, the highest body of the African Union, in 2020.

17. **Ms. Baghli** (Observer for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation) said that the countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) were often countries of origin, transit and destination. At the previous meeting of the Organization’s Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Abu Dhabi in March 2019, participants had called upon the international community to ensure that equitable burden-sharing was achieved on the ground, especially given that most refugees were in low-income countries. The environment ministers of OIC countries, who had met the preceding week in Rabat, had noted that while, historically, the share contributed by OIC countries to greenhouse emissions and global warming was negligible, those countries were among the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, as could be seen in the Horn of Africa.

18. OIC was engaged in activities in many areas. For example, in Somalia, it was bolstering its office in order to better organize its humanitarian activities and support the 2020 road map for peace, stability and security in that country. In the Niger, it was transforming its humanitarian office into a regional one that could better address multifaceted and transnational realities. In Yemen, it was seeking to resume the work of its humanitarian office in order to provide assistance to internally displaced persons. It also planned to provide grants to some Yemeni students to allow them to pursue their studies in other OIC member States. In addition, the Islamic Solidarity Fund was providing food and non-food assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. She hoped that the global campaign to eradicate statelessness would bear fruit and that the Government of Myanmar would swiftly take the necessary steps to allow the Rohingya and other minorities to return to Myanmar.

19. **Ms. Cuevas Barron** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that the solution to the problem of statelessness, which affected millions of people around the world, lay in the construction of an adequate legal framework. While solutions were in the hands of governments and decision makers, parliamentarians had considerable room for manoeuvre. They had the power to raise the issue of statelessness in their legislative bodies, to increase awareness of that complex concept and promote legislative amendments. In order for their actions to resonate, however, they needed to be as well-informed as possible. Through its committee on international humanitarian law, the Inter-Parliamentary Union had been working over the previous years to sensitize members of parliament to statelessness and to give them the necessary tools to be able to champion statelessness issues. In collaboration with UNHCR, the Union had produced several handbooks for parliamentarians, the latest titled *Good practices in nationality laws for the prevention and reduction of statelessness*. The Union would continue to address statelessness at each of its assemblies and to involve parliamentarians, in particular women and young parliamentarians, in its efforts to bring an end to statelessness.

20. **Mr. Poirel** (Observer for the Council of Europe) said that the Council of Europe had for many years been working through its various bodies to ensure the access of all individuals to a nationality and to prevent statelessness. Those efforts included adoption of

the 1997 European Convention on Nationality and of the 2006 Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession. The Council's Committee of Ministers had also formulated a series of recommendations on the issue. However, there were regrettably still more than 520,000 cases of statelessness in Europe. The Council was aware of its role and undertook to encourage member States that had not yet ratified the two conventions to do so and, where applicable, to withdraw any reservations they may have made with respect to them. It also undertook to continue supporting member States, with the assistance of UNHCR, in establishing statelessness determination procedures or making existing ones more effective, and increasing the protection provided by those States to stateless persons.

21. **Mr. Rusanganwa** (Observer for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region) said that the Great Lakes Region was one of the regions of the world most affected by conflicts, a circumstance that fuelled increases in statelessness or the risk of statelessness. Aware of the harmful effects of the phenomenon, which was caused in part by protracted displacement situations, the Heads of State and Government of the Region had resolved to combat it and put into action the commitment they had made under article 68 of the 2004 Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. On 16 October 2017, in Brazzaville, the 12 foreign affairs ministers of the member States of the Conference had adopted a declaration on the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region, which was accompanied by a regional action plan for the period 2017–2019. Since then, significant steps had been taken, including the designation of national and regional focal points on statelessness, but immense challenges remained. The Conference had thus undertaken to, *inter alia*, support research on statelessness in the Great Lakes Region; lead the development and implementation of a regional strategy on civil status, in particular birth registration; encourage member States that were not yet parties to the two statelessness conventions to accede to those instruments; and give civil society the means to contribute to the fight against statelessness.

22. **Mr. Veuthey** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that refugees living in camps did not necessarily consider applying for citizenship in their host country because their priority was often to return home. That increased the risk of statelessness and needed to be taken into account when examining the issue. Through its global humanitarian action, the Sovereign Order of Malta aimed to ensure that all individuals, particularly migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons, enjoyed citizenship rights on equal terms. The Order was present in Asia, where its activities included providing emergency medical care to displaced Rohingya in Myanmar. In Africa, it provided assistance to South Sudanese and Congolese refugees living in camps in Uganda; it was also active in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Tanzania. In South America, it provided assistance to Venezuelan refugees in Colombia and it extended all possible support in the Middle East, particularly to Syrian refugees.

23. **Ms. Relano** (Observer for the United Nations Children's Fund) said that it was estimated that at least one third of the 10 million stateless persons were children. To address that dire situation, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR had, in 2017, jointly created the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality with the goal of ensuring that no child would be born stateless. Under the coalition, joint strategies had been established in 20 countries to address childhood statelessness, leading, for example, to the promotion of birth registration in Albania, particularly for children in the Egyptian and Roma communities. UNICEF was committed to advocating against gender discrimination in nationality laws and civil registration laws, and to giving civil society actors and national governments the tools to better understand and address childhood statelessness.

24. **Ms. Jerger** (Observer for the World Food Programme) said that, given the gravity of global displacement, it was important to adapt and to find new ways of working together to enhance the self-reliance of refugees and affected communities in the areas of food security and nutrition. The World Food Programme (WFP) looked forward to further strengthening its partnership with UNHCR and wished to thank the United States of America for funding the targeting hub that would allow WFP and UNHCR to better design, target and prioritize joint programmes for those furthest behind.

25. **Ms. Rishmawi** (Observer for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the human rights of stateless persons was an issue that

connected the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNHCR, with action on the issue already having been taken in 2015. The Forum on Minority Issues organized by OHCHR in 2018 on the theme “Statelessness: A Minority Issue” had led to the formulation of a series of recommendations on the issue. OHCHR had also been paying close attention to the impact of arbitrary deprivation of nationality on the rights of the child. Given the human rights dimensions surrounding statelessness, OHCHR would continue to call attention to the issue, particularly in the context of the Universal Periodic Review process, and to work with UNHCR to remove gender discrimination in nationality laws.

26. **Mr. Álvarez Vásquez** (Observer for the Civil Registry and Identity Service of Chile), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics, said that civil registry and identity services played a central role in preventing and eliminating statelessness and the risk of statelessness through the registration of births, the issuance of identity documents and the naturalization of stateless persons, migrants and refugees, in accordance with the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014–2024, the Brazil Plan of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

27. The member States of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics had taken action to reduce statelessness. Costa Rica had, jointly with Panama and UNHCR, implemented the Chiriticos Project to register births in the Ngobe-Buglé indigenous community, leading to 20,000 registrations. Colombia had taken measures with respect to children born in its territory to Venezuelan parents who did not meet the domicile requirements for obtaining Colombian nationality; those measures had allowed over 3,000 children to acquire Colombian nationality. The Chilean programme “Chile Reconoce” had led to official recognition for many children of irregular migrants.

28. The Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics was committed to continuing its mission at the regional level. It would continue to push for the registration of all births, the issuance of identity documents and for efforts to prevent and eliminate statelessness; encourage the implementation of national, bilateral and multilateral projects to eliminate statelessness; promote the interoperability of national databases on migrants and refugees; and keep the focus on the best interests of the child in efforts to identify asylum seekers and refugees and issue documents to those individuals. He called upon donor countries and other relevant stakeholders to continue supporting civil registry offices in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to help them eliminate statelessness in the region.

29. **Ms. Thomas** (Observer for the Women’s Refugee Commission), speaking on behalf of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), said that she commended UNHCR for its work to combat statelessness and welcomed the efforts of States that had taken steps to do the same. The threat of statelessness continued to grow and, in the vast majority of cases, statelessness would have ceased to exist if States had fully implemented their obligations under international law. The NGOs called on States to take immediate action to end discrimination in nationality laws and in practice. As the majority of stateless persons belonged to minority communities, the NGOs also called on States to take strong action to confront racism, discrimination and xenophobia so as to effectively address statelessness and the root causes of genocide. Moreover, no State should submit its citizens or residents to arbitrary and discriminatory procedures requiring them to prove their status. States should also reassess laws, policies and practices that provide for certain individuals to be deprived of their nationality for reasons of national security. The NGOs also called on States to protect the right of children to a nationality and to immediately register all births, including the births of children of refugees, foreigners and stateless persons; children belonging to minority communities; and children born to parents not legally married. States should also guarantee all parents the right to obtain birth certificates for their children, regardless of their gender or marital status. States should fully integrate the issue of statelessness in the implementation of the global compact on refugees and put identification, screening and determination procedures into place so that stateless persons would not be placed in detention. The NGOs urged States to collect comprehensive, disaggregated data on statelessness and called on the United Nations to improve its statistical reporting methodology.

30. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts of the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Sovereign Order of Malta and the Women's Refugee Commission and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

31. **Mr. Klymenko** (Observer for Ukraine) said that the delegation of the Russian Federation had sought to politicize the debate by making false statements about Ukraine. His country was experiencing its sixth consecutive year of aggression by the Russian Federation. That aggression was well-documented by reputable international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NGOs such as Amnesty International as well as in satellite images. It was the root cause of the massive internal displacement occurring in Ukraine; 1.4 million Ukrainians were currently displaced within their own country. In spite of the Minsk Protocol, the Russian Federation was continuing to supply weaponry and munitions to south-eastern Ukraine and to support and train armed groups, which had an effect on, among other things, migration. Furthermore, in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea, the Russian Federation had imposed Russian nationality on the local population, in violation of the norms of international humanitarian law and the sovereignty of Ukraine. The Russian Federation sought to manipulate the international community by announcing that it was receiving Ukrainian refugees when it had itself caused the conflict that had prompted those individuals to leave their country. The Russian Federation should implement the Minsk Protocol, and its wrongdoing must be strongly condemned.

32. **Mr. Petrossian** (Armenia) said that he rejected the false allegations made by the delegation of Azerbaijan against Armenia. His delegation was very disappointed that distorted facts and inflated figures had been communicated for political purposes. It was immoral to provide speculative information on displaced persons and their suffering. He was confident that UNHCR would keep the actual figures in mind rather than the exaggerated ones used for political ends.

33. **Mr. Alemán Pérez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that some Latin American countries served as puppets of the United States Government and claimed to be unaware of the resolute efforts being made by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to manage the unusual migration flows of Venezuelans. The President of Colombia had recently shown photographs at the United Nations that were supposed to depict members of the Colombian armed forces in Venezuela; however, it had later been shown that the photographs had actually been taken in Colombia. The Colombian Government had also prevented the Venezuelan Government from opening consulates in its territory, which hindered the protection of Venezuelan refugees, and had released inaccurate figures so as to manipulate the international community and obtain undue financial assistance; Venezuela, which had been hosting refugees for many years, had never used their suffering for political purposes. The so-called Venezuelan humanitarian crisis to which the delegation of Peru referred did not exist, as had been confirmed by the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas. However, an unjust trade, economic and financial war was indeed being conducted by the United States Government against Venezuela.

34. **Ms. Myat** (Observer for Myanmar) said that the terms "genocide" and "atrocities" should not be used without an inquiry first being conducted. The violence and mass displacement had been triggered by terrorist attacks. Her Government felt deeply for all displaced persons and had reached out immediately to Bangladesh when the displacement had started. The Government had invested considerable resources in rebuilding Rakhine State and implementing social and economic plans. It was carrying out infrastructure projects, in keeping with the recommendations of Mr. Kofi Annan, and was working to boost the local economy to provide a livelihood and job opportunities for returnees and internally displaced persons. The Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine contributed to the implementation of projects

with impact-driven results. The national verification process was the same for all persons applying to become citizens of Myanmar.

35. **Mr. Akhmadov** (Azerbaijan) said that the Security Council had adopted four resolutions on the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which called for the immediate withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the districts of Kelbajar, Aghdam, Fizuli, Jabrayil, Qubadli and Zangelan, and reaffirmed the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The Security Council also reaffirmed the right of Azerbaijanis to return to their homes. Armenia had yet to implement those resolutions.

36. **Mr. Akzhigitov** (Russian Federation) said that he rejected the allegations made against the Russian Federation by the representative of Ukraine. Ukrainian policy had caused the mass displacement in the country.

37. **Mr. Petrossian** (Armenia) said that bilateral conflicts did not belong in the UNHCR Executive Committee, which was a humanitarian forum.

38. **Mr. Klymenko** (Observer for Ukraine) said that he rejected the allegations made by the delegation of the Russian Federation and asked that the Chair demand that the Russian delegation stop its harmful behaviour.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.