



# General Assembly

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## Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Seventieth session

### Summary record of the 722nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 8 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Muylle (Vice-Chair) ..... (Belgium)

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

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

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

1. **Ms. Cardoso Januário** (Observer for Angola) said that her country's Constitution guaranteed foreigners and stateless persons fundamental rights and freedoms and protection by the State. The law on nationality and its implementing decree granted legal status to stateless persons, and the law on the legal regime for foreigners allowed persons born in Angola who had no other nationality to acquire Angolan nationality. In a resolute effort to prevent statelessness, the country had acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. In addition, it was working to expand the civil registry, by issuing identity documents free of charge and registering children at birth. It had also established a commission to issue opinions on the acquisition and loss of nationality. Lastly, it was in the process of establishing a technical committee and developing a national action plan for the elimination of statelessness by 2024.

2. **Mr. Odalović** (Serbia) said that his country aligned itself with the statement of the European Union and that of the Group of Friends of the I Belong campaign. Since 2011, Serbia had amended its legislation to reduce the number of stateless persons. The memorandum of understanding signed by the Ministry of Public Administration, local self-government, the Ombudsman and the Representation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Serbia had helped to improve coordination among the various authorities and to significantly reduce the undocumented population. Serbia would continue to implement the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024 and to fulfil its obligations under international instruments, with the ultimate goal of ending statelessness and preventing new cases. It had hosted refugees and displaced persons, including from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo and Metohija, demonstrating its commitment to providing protection and assistance to all forcibly displaced persons. Of the approximately 3,800 refugees in Serbia, 3,050 had been placed in reception centres. Very few of them had applied for asylum, as Western European countries were their final destinations. In partnership with UNHCR, the European Commission, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Regional Housing Programme was being jointly implemented by Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. In addition to refugees, Serbia was hosting 200,000 internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, who, even 20 years after the war, had not been able to return to their places of origin and were not able fully to enjoy their political, economic and social rights. Considering the economic and other realities in the region, it was clear that a sustainable solution for displaced persons would not be achieved without further assistance from the international community, in particular from UNHCR.

3. **Mr. Talibov** (Azerbaijan) said that his country had acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and had adopted laws and regulations aimed at reducing the number of stateless persons. It was well known that the 250,000 people who had fled the ethnic cleansing carried out by Armenia between 1988 and 1992 had been granted Azerbaijani citizenship. The same was true for children born to stateless parents or unknown parents on the national territory. In addition, the nationality law was being amended to facilitate the naturalization of stateless persons living in Azerbaijan. Since 2015, migration officials had been implementing specific measures in the framework of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024 to identify stateless persons and provide them with adequate protection. The status of 389 persons had been regularized.

4. **Ms. Kazakova** (Russian Federation) said that her Government was particularly concerned about the large number of stateless persons in some European States and believed that the situation should remain a priority for UNHCR. The Russian Federation had established a simplified procedure for acquiring citizenship for stateless persons permanently residing on its territory, including citizens of the former Soviet Union. Stateless persons had the same rights as Russian nationals, including with regard to medical care, education and other social services, and could be elected to serve in local government. The number of stateless persons had been steadily declining; more than 800,000 had obtained Russian citizenship since 2002. It was of the utmost importance to resolve conflicts and to improve

the social and economic situation in countries of origin in order to enable the voluntary return of refugees and prevent new waves of migration. It called on UNHCR to continue to help facilitate the return of Syrian refugees to their places of origin. The Russian Federation played an important role in addressing the refugee situation; hosted many forced migrants on its territory, including more than a million Ukrainians; provided humanitarian assistance to refugees' countries of origin; and supported the adoption of the global compact on refugees. It hoped that the structural reform to decentralize UNHCR operations would not prevent the Organization from upholding the principles of neutrality, independence and humanity in its work.

5. **Princess Dlamini** (Observer for Eswatini) said that her country had dedicated considerable resources to the protection of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons. In 2019, Africa was commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, as well as the tenth anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, which Eswatini had signed and ratified. Furthermore, the country had incorporated the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa into its national legislation through Refugees Act No. 15 of 2017, which had improved the processing of asylum applications. A team, led by the Deputy Prime Minister, had been established to implement the national action plan to eradicate statelessness, which was in line with the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024.

6. **Ms. Baković** (Montenegro) said that her country was a signatory to the most significant conventions on statelessness. Following the wars that had taken place during the 1990s, Montenegro had accepted 130,000 refugees, 30,000 of which had decided to remain in the country and had obtained Montenegrin citizenship. In 2008, Montenegro had adopted a law on citizenship with a view to eliminating statelessness for persons born on its territory, in line with the principles enshrined in the European Convention on Nationality. The Government had also established a procedure for determining the status of stateless persons through the adoption of a new law on foreigners, which had entered into force in March 2018. In order to regularize the situation of internally displaced persons from Kosovo residing in Montenegro and provide them with legal and practical assistance, an agreement had been signed in 2013 between the Government of Montenegro and the Government of Kosovo. Montenegro had taken many measures to provide a sustainable solution for vulnerable social groups residing on its territory. Specifically, in 2014, the Government had launched a call to identify stateless and undocumented persons, following which 486 people had come forward. It turned out that only 7 of them did not have citizenship of any State. Since then, the status of those persons had been regularized.

7. **Mr. Ebsa** (Ethiopia) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States. Ethiopia was making great efforts to restore peace in the Horn of Africa and thus reduce potential refugee inflows. In particular, it had played a key role in the conclusion of the Constitutional Declaration in the Sudan and in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. It had also undertaken reforms at the national level; adopted new laws, including one on refugees; and restructuring the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs. In addition, considerable progress had been made in improving refugees' access to employment and education. The enrolment rate stood at 74 per cent for refugee children of primary school age and 12 per cent for those of secondary school age. His Government urged its partners to increase their support so that Ethiopia could continue to assist the large number of refugees residing on its territory. There were 905,000 refugees living in Ethiopia, 65,000 of them having arrived in 2019. The country's refugee response plan suffered from serious underfunding: only 37 per cent of the 2019 budget of \$346.5 million had been funded to date. Ethiopia was also facing difficulties arising from the lack of renewable energy resources. It was particularly concerned about deforestation around refugee camps. With regard to stateless persons, it called on UNHCR to support the country in conducting a study that would allow it to understand the extent of statelessness on its territory and to strengthen its policies in favour of voluntary returns and sustainable reintegration.

8. **Mr. Sulit** (Philippines) said that his country had been working for several years to identify populations at risk of statelessness and to reduce and prevent that risk. In 2012, the

Department of Justice had issued rules establishing the procedure for identifying refugee and stateless persons. Between 2014 and 2019, the programme for registering and ascertaining the nationality of persons of Indonesian descent had enabled 8,371 persons to avoid statelessness. Between 2016 and August 2019, in accordance with the Philippine Passport Act of 1996, the authorities had issued machine-readable travel documents to 527 refugees and stateless persons. In 2017, the Philippines had adopted a national action plan to end statelessness by 2024, in parallel with the I Belong campaign. Moreover, refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons were provided special assistance in gaining access to technical education and vocational training. Nevertheless, much remained to be done. The Philippines was committed to improving its policy, legal and operational framework to ensure that stateless persons could fully exercise their rights as established in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and to facilitate the access of vulnerable and marginalized populations to documentation through birth and civil registration. The Philippines intended to continue the process of accession to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Finally, the country would continue to provide technical support to other States in the region and to cooperate with UNHCR both financially and operationally.

9. **Ms. Gill** (Australia) said that, since 2017, her country had contributed more than \$160 million in humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh and Myanmar to address the Rohingya refugee crisis. Acting on the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State was essential to enabling the voluntary and sustainable return, in safety and dignity, of all displaced Rohingya. As part of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, Australia had contributed to the development of a civil registration assessment toolkit. That toolkit enabled States to identify the barriers faced by refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons regarding access to civil registration. Reducing those barriers allowed vulnerable populations to obtain identity documents and enjoy the rights and protections associated with them. Australia remained one of the top three countries in the world for permanent resettlement. The number of places available had increased to 18,750 in 2019 and would remain the same over the next two years. In addition, 2019 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Woman at Risk visa programme, which helped refugee women in particularly vulnerable situations and their dependents to safely resettle in Australia, free from the threat of violence. Over 23,500 such visas had been granted since the start of the programme.

10. **Mr. Valentine** (Canada) said that his country was a major donor to UNHCR, providing timely, multi-year and unearmarked funding as a demonstration of its solidarity. Canada would actively participate in the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 and called on member States to show solidarity with refugee host countries, including through more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing. In that regard, Canada had admitted more refugees for resettlement in 2018 than any other country. As a member of the Group of Friends of the I Belong campaign, Canada associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group and viewed the high-level debate on statelessness as an opportunity to encourage the international community and UNHCR to strengthen their efforts to end statelessness by 2024.

11. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by States and their support for the activities of UNHCR. It was important that countries should develop specific action plans to shape their commitments by acceding to the conventions. The process of decentralizing UNHCR operations would not undermine the coherence of the strategy and policies developed by headquarters.

12. **Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, over the years, his country had hosted 9 million foreign nationals who had been able to freely benefit from all the available education, health, housing and food programmes. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had never received financial assistance from UNHCR or any other international organization to mitigate the cost of its social programmes that benefited migrants and refugees. Xenophobia and violence against Venezuelan nationals who had emigrated to other countries in the region had led many of them to choose to return to the country. President Maduro had launched a voluntary repatriation plan which had allowed the return of thousands of Venezuelans. Currently, however, there were not enough resources to repatriate all those who had gone abroad. President Maduro called on the United Nations, including UNHCR,

and the International Organization for Migration to provide his country with \$200 million in assistance, which would be used, inter alia, to finance the processing of applications for voluntary return.

13. **Mr. Silhavy** (Czechia) said that his country's strategy was to directly support the long-term stabilization of areas at risk, including through development cooperation and the swift provision of humanitarian assistance. The Czech Republic believed that the best way to resolve the refugee crisis was to address its root causes. Historically, the country had been involved in addressing the Afghan refugee crisis and had participated in stabilization activities in the Syria and Iraq, but it intended to contribute more actively to efforts in Africa, particularly in North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Under the Czech humanitarian medical evacuation programme, 93 medical teams had been deployed, more than 3,000 surgeries had been performed and some 227 medical evacuations to the Czech Republic had been carried out. The programme had been implemented in 20 countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, Senegal and Ukraine, and had involved the training of local medical teams. The Czech Republic had also established an assistance programme for refugees in the field, including in the Middle East, Africa and the Western Balkans. Through that programme, the basic needs of more than 350,000 people had been met and shelters had been built for 61,000 refugees. Moreover, the Czech Republic, through its Refugee Facilities Administration, was committed to providing the best care possible to refugees on its territory.

14. **Ms. Quinteros** (Argentina) said that her country applied the principles of *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* and that all persons born on the national territory were entitled to citizenship, regardless of the nationality and legal or migratory status of their parents, provided that they had resided in the country for at least two years. The general law on the recognition and protection of stateless persons, issued on 28 August 2019, established a fair and efficient procedure for determining the status of stateless persons and facilitating their naturalization. The National Committee for Refugees would soon be allocated the necessary resources to apply the law. Argentina had established a special humanitarian visa programme for people affected by the conflict in Syria and hosted more than 170,000 Venezuelan refugees. It had committed to carrying out initiatives in 2020 to raise awareness about statelessness within the framework of the Southern Common Market. It had further committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that the children of naturalized Argentine citizens who were in a situation of statelessness or at risk of statelessness could gain access to citizenship and to promote the naturalization of all persons recognized as stateless, including by organizing training seminars for justice officials by 2022. Studies would be conducted to determine the causes of underregistration at the national level, and campaigns would be conducted to raise parents' awareness of the importance of registering births and requesting identity documents. Argentina was also committed to strengthening the coordination of civil registries at the national level and within the framework of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics, by promoting the exchange of best practices and carrying out a comparative study of laws, policies, administrative practices and case law relating to birth registration.

15. **Ms. Cordoba Ulate** (Costa Rica) said that her country associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Costa Rica had been a party to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness since 1977 and as such was committed to protecting the right to nationality. Moreover, in March 2017, it had become the first Latin American country to grant nationality to a stateless person. With the support of UNHCR, Costa Rica, together with Panama, had launched the "Chiriticos" project, aimed at reducing the number of unregistered births in the Ngobe-Bugle indigenous community. At the current high-level debate, it wished to make the following five new commitments to eliminate statelessness by 2024: to halve the processing time for applications for statelessness status; to make the mechanism for the protection of stateless persons more accessible; to introduce a law making it possible for stateless persons to obtain travel documents; to help stateless persons integrate into Costa Rican society and to provide them with information; and to strengthen birth registration mechanisms, especially in border areas, indigenous territories and hard-to-reach rural areas.

16. **Mr. Lorenz** (Luxembourg) said that his country associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and continued to financially support the priorities of

UNHCR. Luxembourg called for improved care for refugees living in camps in the Niger. The new Act on Luxembourg nationality, which had entered into force on 1 April 2017, facilitated the acquisition of nationality for 10 categories of applicants, including beneficiaries of international protection and stateless persons. Luxembourg called for the establishment of a common system throughout the European Union to simplify administrative procedures for refugees.

17. **Mr. Corcho Díaz** (Observer for Panama) said that his country had developed legislative, administrative and policy measures to prevent and eliminate statelessness. For example, Panama had concluded bilateral agreements with Costa Rica and Colombia to ensure the civil registration of Panamanian nationals located in border areas and remote areas. On the basis of those agreements, an 11-day campaign had been conducted during which the identity of 16,500 people had been verified. In addition, thanks to the birth registration protocol, which had been applied since 2011 by the National Directorate of the Civil Registry, the rate of unregistered births had fallen to 2.2 per cent, the lowest rate in the region. That protocol also facilitated the issuance of identity documents, with a view to upholding the right of every individual to a name and a nationality. Panama was planning to establish an inter-institutional commission tasked with effectively implementing Act No. 28 of 2011, by which the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons had been adopted, and with publicizing the Convention.

18. **Ms. Annus** (Estonia) said that her country aligned itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. It welcomed the strengthening of existing UNHCR partnerships and the establishment of new partnerships with the private sector and civil society, which would enable the development of innovative approaches to achieving long-term, durable solutions. Estonia had contributed to the care of Syrian and Rohingya refugees and the management of internally displaced persons in Ukraine, as well as the education of displaced children living in refugee camps in Jordan and Iraq, which it considered a key issue and a major source of concern. In Estonia, persons with undetermined nationality had permanent residence permits and enjoyed all social rights. The Government had taken several measures to encourage such persons to apply for Estonian citizenship, such as simplifying naturalization procedures, in particular for children and older persons. Since January 2016, children born in Estonia to parents with undetermined citizenship who had resided in the country for at least five years automatically received Estonian nationality from the moment of birth. Estonia supported the decentralization efforts of UNHCR and believed that innovative digital tools could help ensure that no one was left behind.

19. **Mr. Karimzoda** (Observer for Tajikistan) said that his country fully supported the implementation of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024. To that end, it had adopted a law on nationality and the status of foreigners and stateless persons, as well as other laws and regulations that enshrined the right to a nationality, established strategies for combatting statelessness and upheld the right to retain one's nationality regardless of place of residence or marital status. Despite the precarious security situation regionally and internationally, Tajikistan was taking concrete steps to strengthen the refugee protection regime and address migration-related issues. In particular, it had begun to repatriate Tajik children in Iraq. In collaboration with UNHCR and other partners, it had launched a pilot project in 2014 to identify and register stateless persons and persons at risk in various parts of the country. Identity documents had been issued to the persons concerned, legal assistance had been provided to the most vulnerable population groups and awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted. A campaign launched in 2019 to expand birth registration had led to the proposal of a number of measures aimed at preventing statelessness. Such measures included reviewing the records of migrants living in Tajikistan with a view to possibly regularizing their situation; completing the overhaul of the civil registry to ensure compliance with the obligation to register children at birth; identifying stateless persons and persons at risk in the context of the population census planned for 2020; and considering the possibility of ratifying the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

20. **Mr. Gallagher** (Ireland) said that his country aligned itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union and commended UNHCR for its ambitious decentralization plan. Ireland strongly endorsed the global compact on refugees and

recognized the importance of leading by example. Accordingly, it had increased its funding to UNHCR over the past five years and had launched a new international development policy in 2019 in which it reaffirmed support for the multilateral framework for the protection of refugees. In 2015, Ireland had launched the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, which had made it possible to admit 2,600 refugees, and was committed to admitting 900 more – 750 Syrians and 150 Eritreans – in 2020. The pilot phase of a community-based refugee sponsorship programme, which had begun in December 2018, would be extended beyond October 2019.

21. **Ms. Alfaro Espinosa** (Peru) said that her country supported the statement made by Ecuador on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, as well as the statement made the previous day by the representative of Thailand on behalf of the Group of Friends of the I Belong campaign. In Peru, *jus solis*, according to which anyone born in the territory acquired Peruvian nationality, coexisted with *jus sanguinis*, according to which any child born abroad to at least one Peruvian parent acquired Peruvian nationality. It was essential to uphold the principle of sharing the responsibility and the burden of hosting refugees in order to alleviate the pressure on countries that hosted refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons, in accordance with the global compact on refugees. As a result of the serious economic, social, political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, 4.3 million people had fled that country. Of those, 3.5 million had sought refuge in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean and 900,000 were in Peru, which had always been a land of refuge. The Government had created a special mechanism for migrants, known as “temporary residence permits”, which had benefited 490,000 Venezuelans who were lawfully residing in Peru. Some 290,000 other Venezuelans had sought asylum in Peru, and were thus permitted to live and work legally. The Government would continue its policy of providing adequate protection to refugees and would seek, to the extent of its resources, to uphold the rights of refugees, migrants and stateless persons, to meet their needs and to ensure their integration. The Peruvian Government welcomed the considerable support that UNHCR had provided in strengthening the logistical and operational capacity of the executive secretariat of the Special Commission for Refugees; as a result, it had been possible to hire additional staff, to establish a new registration system for asylum applications and to expand the Commission’s presence in the country, in particular along the border between Peru and Venezuela.

22. **Mr. Andrews** (Observer for Belize) said that organized crime and corruption and the virtual non-existence of basic services in northern Central America had led to an escalation in chronic violence and insecurity which, in turn, had led to increased forced displacement, as evidenced by the mass exodus of migrants to the North. Climate change, which threatened the very existence of small island developing States and low-lying coastal areas, also played a significant role in the acceleration of forced displacement, as rising sea levels changed States’ territories and forced people to flee. In extreme scenarios, such changes might lead to the displacement of entire populations, potentially rendering them stateless. The Government of Belize was grateful to UNHCR for having re-established a presence in the country and for its efforts to strengthen the capacities of institutions responsible for affording services to refugees, as well as for providing for the basic needs of asylum seekers and supporting host communities. On 27 October 2017, Belize had signed the San Pedro Sula Declaration on the comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework; in doing so, it had committed to working jointly with the countries of origin, transit or destination of persons who had been forcibly displaced, with a view to providing better protection to those in need and to establishing subregional responsibility-sharing mechanisms. The current asylum procedure was not fully satisfactory, in that it required refugees to submit their applications for asylum within 14 days of arriving in Belize; a proposed amendment to the Refugees Act, which would extend the deadline for submitting applications, was expected to remedy the shortcomings of the current procedure. In any case, registered asylum seekers could not be returned to their countries of origin and had access to education and health care. The Education Act made education compulsory for all children under the age of 15, regardless of their immigration status. Furthermore, the Constitution provided that all persons born in Belize automatically acquired Belizean nationality, irrespective of the immigration status of their parents. In addition, any individual with at least one Belizean parent was automatically deemed to be Belizean by descent, regardless of his or her place of birth. To combat

statelessness and achieve the goal of universal birth registration, Belize intended to facilitate access to civil registration services.

23. **Mr. Magloire** (Observer for Haiti) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by Ecuador on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean Group. In 2018, Haiti had acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. In order to fulfil its commitments on statelessness, Haiti had sought to more clearly define the status of stateless persons and had introduced a system for issuing identity documents and birth certificates, which, while not automatically conferring nationality, established the identity and filiation of such persons, thereby giving them legal existence. Approximately 1 million people living in remote areas in Haiti, including people who had been repatriated from the Dominican Republic since 2015, were at risk of becoming stateless. Once they had been individually identified, Haiti would endeavour to find appropriate solutions for them in close cooperation with the Dominican authorities. The Government planned to simplify birth registration procedures in rural and remote areas, to continue improving the civil registry system and to amend nationality legislation by 2022, with a view to combating statelessness.

24. **Mr. Abreu** (Mozambique) welcomed the reference made by the High Commissioner in his opening statement to displacements related to climate change and natural disasters and recalled that Cyclones Idai and Kenneth had caused considerable damage in Mozambique. The visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the affected areas had provided hope to the victims and had underscored the importance of working together and showing support and solidarity under such circumstances. The Government of Mozambique was committed to creating conditions conducive to the implementation of the global compact on refugees, which was aimed at protecting people who were forcibly displaced in diverse situations. To that end, it had launched a major structural reform of the refugee assistance system and had established mechanisms to develop activities in connection with the global compact. Mozambique had acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Under Mozambican law, any person born in the territory automatically acquired Mozambican nationality. The Government intended to improve the birth registration system and make it accessible to as many people as possible.

25. **Mr. Madula** (Observer for Malawi) said that his country associated itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the African Union Commission. Malawi had acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. In August 2019, there had been 42,561 refugees in Malawi, most of them from the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa, living at Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Under the Constitution, refugees enjoyed the same rights and protection as citizens and had access to the labour market. In order to facilitate their economic integration, the Government had authorized the opening of a bank in Dzaleka Refugee Camp. The Government of Malawi was grateful for the support provided by its partners, including the Jesuit Refugee Service, Plan International and World University Service of Canada. It was regrettable that the World Food Programme, which was responsible for distributing food, had been able to provide half rations since May 2019. In April 2019, Malawi had adopted a procedure under which asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular from North Kivu, South Kivu and Katanga, could be granted refugee status on a prima facie basis. The Government expected to end statelessness through the implementation of its refugee management strategy; as part of that strategy, a procedure had been adopted for the issuance of birth certificates to the children of refugees. In 2016, it had adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in 2018, it had reiterated, before the General Assembly, that it would adhere to the principles set out in the comprehensive refugee response framework for the care of refugees and migrants. In particular, the Government had pledged to reflect issues relating to refugees in developing its national development programme, legislative reforms and registration and documentation procedures, and in promoting livelihood activities.

26. **Ms. Damenti** (Observer for the Republic of Moldova) said that her country aligned itself with the statement made by the European Union under agenda item 3. Noting that the number of forced displacements remained very high and continued to increase, she said that



protracted refugee situations were a major concern. The Republic of Moldova sought ways to better protect refugees and to facilitate their economic and social integration. Emphasis had been placed on cooperation between central and local authorities and the private sector. Her country had acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Since then, it had granted Moldovan citizenship to over 200,000 bearers of Soviet passports. It had also introduced a national statelessness determination procedure, as a result of which the residency of over 1,000 persons in the country had been legalized. Amendments had been made to simplify the procedure for recognizing the citizenship of persons born on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Other amendments would also facilitate the access of stateless persons to Moldovan citizenship.

27. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed States' efforts and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR. In particular, he commended the efforts of Argentina in hosting not only Venezuelan refugees, but also those from countries of other regions, such as Syria. However, all the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region deserved to be commended for their efforts to host millions of Venezuelan refugees and they should benefit from the international community's assistance, in accordance with the principle of sharing the burden and responsibility of hosting refugees. All the information provided by UNHCR, IOM and their partners on the crisis situation in a given country was based on their own findings and was issued following consultations with the authorities of the country concerned. That information, which was intended to encourage the international community to provide support to countries hosting refugees, was disclosed solely for humanitarian purposes. He firmly rejected the assertion that UNHCR, IOM and other partners were making certain statements in an attempt to exploit humanitarian crisis situations for political gain.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*