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Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Seventy-fourth session

Summary record of the 755th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 9 October 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Opening of the session, adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

(A/AC.96/74/1)

1. **The Chair** declared open the seventy-fourth session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
2. She said that there were now more than 108 million persons around the world who had been displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence and human rights violations. That was an increase of 19 million since the previous session of the Executive Committee. It was also significantly more than double the number of displaced persons a decade previously in 2013.
3. It had been a privilege and an honour to chair the Executive Committee during the past year. She had had the opportunity to see at first hand the important work that the Office, together with its committed partners, was doing, particularly during her field visit to Colombia in May. She had been moved by the plight of the refugees, internally displaced persons and people on the move she had met during the visit and had been impressed by the progressive manner in which Colombia was managing those situations.
4. *The agenda was adopted.*
5. At the request of **Ms. Noyes** (United States of America), **the Chair** invited participants to observe a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the recent earthquake in Afghanistan and of the conflict in Israel.
6. *A minute of silence was observed.*
7. *A short film entitled A conversation with Akim was projected.*

Statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

8. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the shocking images of the appalling attacks carried out by Hamas against Israeli civilians had been filling television screens worldwide in the previous 48 hours. The international community was currently witnessing another war in the Middle East, the escalation of which would inevitably cause more suffering to civilians, both Israelis and Palestinians, and risked bringing grave instability to a region already plagued by tensions. It was another dangerous piece in a growing mosaic of crises which, if not addressed courageously, spelled doom for world peace.
9. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was not mandated to deal with the immediate humanitarian consequences of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it was present and active in the region, as it was wherever war forced people to flee: it was mainly conflict that drove up the numbers of refugees and displaced people, which had reached their highest levels in decades.
10. As conflicts grew, so did disrespect for international humanitarian law, which meant that civilians bore the brunt of the impact. During his recent visit to Egypt, South Sudan and Chad, he had heard how people had had to run from the brutal violence that had erupted in April in the Sudan, as their lives had been upended – as suddenly as the lives of the Ukrainians the year before, and those of the Ukrainians still facing death and destruction in the wake of the Russian invasion.
11. While he understood calls to put a stop to irregular movements, it was important to remember that the 110 million people who had been forced to leave their homes had had no choice but to run from men who, by choice, engaged in fighting, killing and persecution.
12. His Office had been tasked with helping to protect, assist and find solutions for those people, yet it was required to do so at one of the most difficult moments in its history, in a world that was increasingly fragmented and inward looking and with too many politicians who fomented culture wars between “us” and “them” and who tolerated or even espoused racism, xenophobia, misinformation, disinformation, religious hatred and hate speech. Talk and action continued to be selfish and short-sighted.

13. Year after year, instead of giving an account of solutions resulting from peace agreements and good governance, from respect for human rights, or from progress on education, health, protecting the planet and other Sustainable Development Goals, he was obliged to speak about an ever-growing number of refugees and displaced people fleeing violence and war.

14. A dire global situation was getting worse. Humanitarian workers were being asked to pick up more pieces in more parts of the world and to try to hold them together for longer, frequently working alone, in the absence of political solutions or hampered by divisive geopolitics. In spite of the divisions, he called on States to focus on the areas where agreement could be reached and in particular to agree that people forced to flee their homes due to conflict or persecution had rights and that a strong, well-resourced UNHCR remained even more necessary than ever.

15. In one year alone, his Office had responded to 44 new emergencies in 31 countries, the latest of which, only days before, had seen 100,000 refugees arriving in Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh. The Office was helping Armenia with the humanitarian response, including the identification of those with specific needs, and a humanitarian appeal had been launched.

16. Violence continued elsewhere. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo there were nearly 1.5 million newly displaced people, of whom 78,000 had fled within the country in just one day the previous week. In the central Sahel region, growing political instability and violence perpetrated by armed groups was forcing more people to flee, including to coastal States. In Somalia, the combination of the climate emergency and conflict had forced nearly 900,000 from their homes, and in Myanmar, hundreds of thousands continued to be displaced by fighting.

17. UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and refugee-led organizations were on the front lines of such crises, carrying out their work in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, even in the most difficult circumstances. Humanitarian workers lived and worked alongside traumatized refugees in eastern Chad, close to the border with the Sudan, helping to protect and support them and meet their basic needs. In addition, at great risk, they also delivered supplies across the border into Darfur to Sudanese people in desperate need.

18. In the aftermath of the unprecedented destruction wrought by the earthquake in southern Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic, he had seen how, despite losing their homes, possessions and, in many cases, family, friends and dear colleagues, humanitarian workers were striving to support the authorities and help others in need.

19. Climate change fuelled unresolved grievances resulting from poor governance, inequity and inequality and combined with conflict, violence and persecution to displace more people, including across borders. Many of the world's displaced already lived in climate-vulnerable settings and in countries that found it challenging to adapt or to build resilience, such as those in the Sahel or the Horn of Africa. As those areas became increasingly uninhabitable, the displaced and their hosts would find it increasingly difficult to secure access to water, energy and livelihoods to enable them to adapt to further environmental stress.

20. Accordingly, the organization's strategic framework for climate action focused on ensuring that climate-related displacement was covered by national adaptation plans, including early warning systems, and that the services and assistance provided were environmentally sustainable. The Office worked with its partners to help Governments build resilience, to prevent displacement where possible and to help the displaced withstand the massive shocks and stress arising from the climate emergency, alongside their host communities.

21. Climate-related displacement could generate protection challenges, so climate action must also include human rights and legal perspectives. UNHCR provided technical and legal advice and guidance to States to ensure that the rules governing international protection were upheld in situations of climate-related displacement. He hoped that leaders at the forthcoming

twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Dubai, would listen to those most affected by the climate emergency, including refugees and displaced people, so that action and resource allocation to address the root causes of climate change could also be guided by lived experience.

22. In that context, the Office also continued to reduce its own carbon footprint, in part through strategic investment to help its local offices transition away from reliance on fossil fuels.

23. The underfunding of UNHCR and of humanitarian operations in general was a cause of great concern. The 2023 humanitarian response plan for the Sudan, for example, covering the more than 4 million people internally displaced since April, was only one third funded, while the regional refugee response plan for the Sudan, which called for \$1 billion, was one quarter funded. Such shortfalls in assistance were prompting Sudanese nationals who had recently fled the fighting to move on from countries neighbouring the Sudan to others such as Tunisia and Italy. The situation was reminiscent of 2015, when thousands of Syrians and other refugees had moved from the Middle East to Europe as assistance had declined — indeed, the number of Syrians attempting to cross the Mediterranean was once again increasing, as humanitarian aid in the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries was being drastically reduced.

24. Aid fatigue spread quickly. Humanitarian support to Ukrainians, including internally displaced persons, who remained the focus of the UNHCR presence in Ukraine, must not falter, especially as another winter approached.

25. That having been said, he was grateful that humanitarian funding had continued to be substantial, despite the challenges and pressures facing donors, whose own citizens were also confronting inflation, unemployment, economic stagnation and other challenges. The United States of America, followed by Germany, had both made exemplary efforts to ensure that adequate resources were available to respond not only to the massive crisis in Ukraine but also to other situations.

26. Unearmarked contributions had declined to just 12 per cent of government contributions, which ran contrary to the commitments made under the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing and left the Office little flexibility to respond to new emergencies or operate in underfunded crises. He hoped that the top donors of unearmarked resources, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, in particular, would continue to resist that trend.

27. Contributions from individuals, companies and foundations had reached a record \$1.2 billion, or 21 per cent of the Office's global income. The private sector was also active in advocacy, combating misinformation, hiring refugees, expanding complementary pathways and investing in refugee and host communities to create economic opportunities for the future, in a true reflection of the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees. UNHCR had also expanded innovative financing initiatives, continuing to increase support through Islamic philanthropy, for example, as well as breaking ground in other areas such as the green financing facility.

28. Even so, humanitarian needs outweighed humanitarian resources, while key donors had announced cuts in their humanitarian budgets. Private funding, though substantial, would not match the previous year's levels. As a result, funding levels for 2023 and projections for 2024 were dangerously low.

29. His Office was setting priorities, taking many hard decisions to increase efficiency and effectiveness. It had introduced new, streamlined systems, tools and processes. In order to address duplication and gaps between headquarters, regional bureaux and country operations and keep the focus on delivery, staff costs and the number of posts were being reduced. The Office also coordinated with other agencies to rationalize expenditure where possible.

30. A shortfall of \$650 million nevertheless remained that must be made up before the end of the year. The outlook for 2024 was worrying, not least for its impact on close partners such as the World Food Programme (WFP). Some of the Office's most reliable donors had promised help in order to avoid cutting expenditure in vital areas, including emergency

responses, and he appealed to all States to make an extra effort, including donor States in the Gulf region and others whose contributions had declined or had never been substantial.

31. The consequences of financial shortfalls were stark, affecting refugees and displaced people and putting pressure on host countries – still the largest donors to refugees. Cuts to food assistance in Bangladesh and Jordan and several African countries, for example, had resulted in increased onward movement for some refugees and negative coping mechanisms for others; in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo protection services had been reduced, despite the dramatic need for such services in that country.

32. Under such circumstances, stronger partnerships with development organizations became crucial. Phenomenal progress had been made since the affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), over the two-year period 2020–2021, more than \$11 billion in development assistance from bilateral and multilateral banks had been contributed to refugee responses, in addition to funding from United Nations agencies, NGOs and coordinated humanitarian appeals.

33. He encouraged participants to read the World Bank *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees and Societies*, which proposed an integrated framework to maximize the development gains of hosting refugees. A key challenge was that gains from development assistance tended to be felt only in the medium to long term, in situations that demanded fast responses. Nevertheless, there had been a number of instances in which development assistance had been deployed at the start of crises, which he would describe as “emergency development” assistance. In Chad, for example, the World Bank had announced \$340 million worth of development projects to help refugees and host communities, a proposal that tied in with a separate announcement by the United States of \$163 million in humanitarian assistance to address the situation in the Sudan. Humanitarian and development streams had thus merged early in that crisis, providing a model that ensured that commitments made by development organizations could be implemented rapidly. He appealed to States to adopt that model, which made it possible for refugees to be rapidly integrated into national programmes to provide them with services and opportunities, while also supporting the host countries until such time as refugees could return home voluntarily, in safety and with dignity.

34. Despite the funding shortfalls and cuts, UNHCR remained determined to press for solutions to displacement, even in challenging circumstances. Thanks largely to the United States, Canada and Australia, more refugees would depart for resettlement in 2023 than in 2022. Complementary pathways had also expanded, thanks to programmes led by Ireland, Italy and other countries, and significant efforts by Germany, Canada and Sweden in refugee education, among other areas. In addition, the flagship Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative scholarship programme had helped 7 per cent of refugees enter tertiary education, which augured well for achieving the target of 15 per cent of refugees in tertiary education by 2030.

35. As to solutions to statelessness, Kenyan nationality had been granted to long-standing residents belonging to the Pemba community. In what was the final year of the I Belong campaign to end statelessness within a decade, he invited all States to join the new Global Alliance to End Statelessness.

36. Including refugees in services and giving them access to economic opportunities remained key to resolving protracted and even new situations of displacement. The Office was pursuing those options in several African countries, such as Uganda; while Colombia and Ecuador were leading examples of well-managed hospitality and the search for solutions. Kenya, with over 600,000 refugees, was acting to improve its protection and solutions framework, including through the forward-looking Shirika Plan to promote the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees by transforming camps into integrated settlements, for which UNHCR had already helped mobilize around \$200 million in development funding; he encouraged donors to participate in what was a ground-breaking initiative, including through funding to respond to the climate emergency.

37. The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to Support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries remained an important platform. Nearly 200,000 Afghan displaced people and some 20,000 refugees had returned in the past

18 months, including to priority areas for return and reintegration. At the same time the de facto authorities continued to deny women and girls their rights and a future and, as part of United Nations efforts, his Office continued to encourage a reversal of such regressive policies. Meanwhile, it was important for humanitarian agencies to be able, as they had over the past two years, to provide the people of Afghanistan, especially women and girls, with the critical support they needed and deserved in coping with hardships; it would also serve to remind them that, after 20 years of promises, they were not alone. The needs were immense: to be able to continue, humanitarian operations needed to be better resourced by donors, with greater operational flexibility.

38. The main countries hosting and providing protection to millions of Afghan refugees – namely the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan – must be adequately supported. However, reports of the possible deportation of undocumented Afghans from Pakistan were cause for concern. His Office would continue to engage with and support the authorities in addressing the challenges they faced, while ensuring refugee protection.

39. Solutions to the situation of refugees required, among other things, the necessary resources and trust that it was safe to return home. Such was the case in the Syrian Arab Republic, where progress was needed on both counts. In that regard, he encouraged recent discussions with the Government to continue. Another challenging situation was in Myanmar, where more needed to be done so that the Rohingya could return voluntarily, with their safety, rights and dignity respected.

40. Solutions to internal displacement were also within reach. His Office was working closely with other United Nations entities to achieve progress on the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement in the 16 countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas where it was being piloted. Elsewhere, large numbers of refugees wishing to return home were unable to do so owing to a lack of resources. For instance, although some 24,000 refugees of Burundi had expressed a desire to return, the Office's repatriation programme had a \$13 million shortfall in funding to facilitate their transport and help them to restart their lives. He therefore appealed for greater financial support to help refugees to return home – where they most wanted to go.

41. Mixed movements of refugees and migrants travelling on routes fraught with danger, such as human trafficking, represented a major challenge. The Darién Gap, the Mediterranean Sea and the Bay of Bengal had become synonymous with the loss of lives, the exploitation of vulnerable persons and increasingly difficult challenges for States. While migration and border controls were necessary and a sovereign right, it was impractical and short sighted to focus on those measures alone. It was crucial to take a whole-of-route approach, which underpinned the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and the new pact on migration and asylum, which he hoped would be adopted by the European Union. The approach required States to ensure access to their territory for asylum claims; provide adequate capacity for fair and fast decision-making on refugee status; facilitate the return of those without protection needs, while respecting their rights and dignity; and make safe, legal migration pathways available. Doing so would benefit persons who chose to migrate and countries that desperately needed migrants, while also preventing asylum channels from being overloaded.

42. It was time to debunk the myth that all refugees and migrants were heading to rich countries; in fact, most exited at the first safe, viable opportunity. Almost 70 per cent of refugees were in countries neighbouring their own and nearly 90 per cent of forcibly displaced persons remained in low- and middle-income countries. However, if aid dwindled, as was being seen with regard to the situation in the Sudan, some would take dangerous journeys or fall into the hands of traffickers.

43. Under the whole-of-route approach, countries of destination would need to work with transit countries to strengthen their migration and refugee management systems. In countries of origin, further efforts were needed to address human rights issues, ensure good governance and the rule of law, end conflict, tackle the climate emergency and the development deficit, and create more economic opportunities for young people. No matter the challenge, UNHCR stood ready to support States and find practical solutions that respected the right to seek asylum, international law and the obligations of States and were adapted to the specific

challenges faced. He wished to emphasize that access to territory to seek asylum was the cornerstone of international refugee law and must be maintained, as must the principle of non-refoulement. The outsourcing of asylum obligations was unacceptable.

44. As part of his commitment to making UNHCR more diverse, equitable and inclusive, his Office planned to launch a strategic framework for diversity, equity and inclusion later in 2023. Steps had also been taken to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. While progress had been made, the senior executive team would maintain constant vigilance and take continued action to address that and other issues of integrity.

45. He recalled that UNHCR had been established by Member States, tasked with oversight of the application of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and mandated to help to protect those who had lost the protection of their State. In resolution after resolution, Member States had requested his Office to continue to uphold its mandate and protect those fleeing war and persecution. In that context, he wished to reaffirm that persons who had been persecuted owing to their sexual orientation or gender identity were persons who fell under the mandate of UNHCR. They must be protected if they sought asylum.

46. The second Global Refugee Forum would take stock of progress towards operationalizing the Global Compact on Refugees and of pledges made at the first Forum. It would present an opportunity to renew commitments through further whole-of-society pledges from stakeholders, including States, cities, the private sector and NGOs. Energy, passion and a sense of unity were needed at the Forum in order to support some of the world's most vulnerable people – refugees – and their hosts. Refugees had experienced unimaginable, devastating divisions; they had been divided from their homes, their family, their friends. Everyone must come together to ensure protection, humanitarian aid, development and inclusion, take action for better burden- and responsibility-sharing, and find solutions to what was a global challenge.

General debate

47. **Ms. Mboukou Kimbatsa** (Congo), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the situation of persons falling under the mandate of UNHCR remained deeply worrying. Conflicts across the region, including in the Sudan, and the impact of climate change and natural disasters were at the root of massive displacements of populations internally and externally. For the most part, States hosting persons displaced from their countries of origin were low- and middle-income countries neighbouring the crisis zones.

48. In the light of the increase in the number of displaced persons globally and the attendant challenges faced, the Group supported the High Commissioner's call for the strengthening of solidarity and cooperation to meet the humanitarian needs of, and find durable solutions for, all displaced populations. Africa remained one of the hardest-hit continents, hosting the largest number of refugees and displaced persons. African States had striven tirelessly to strengthen cooperation with UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations and to provide adequate and sustainable responses, including shelter, food, health care and education. However, resources remained insufficient to meet humanitarian needs. Moreover, African host countries faced socioeconomic difficulties owing to the pressure on their limited resources, their infrastructure and their health, education and social welfare systems. The Group was concerned by rising social and political tensions in local communities, issues of national security, such as extremist or criminal groups seeking to exploit refugee movements, the impact on local labour markets of massive influxes of refugees and the increasing presence of irregular migrants in refugee movements. States of the region were increasingly placing an emphasis on conflict resolution, with a view to restoring peace and security in countries of origin and encouraging the voluntary return of refugees – the preferred durable solution to refugee situations.

49. The Group wished to draw the international community's attention to the burden being borne by African host countries. It was past time for policies, programmes and solutions to be put in place, in cooperation with UNHCR and its partners, to effectively manage the challenges caused by the rising numbers of refugees in host countries. Similarly, in the light of the challenging humanitarian situation, the time was ripe for ways and means to be found to address the deficit in funding meant for the continent.

50. Ahead of the second Global Refugee Forum, the Group wished to remind the international community of the objectives and principles of the Global Compact on Refugees, chief among them the principle of responsibility-sharing. The Forum would be an opportunity for States to make new pledges towards achieving durable solutions. Commitments made by African States at the first Forum had been realized, including through the establishment of the relevant legal frameworks.

51. The Group condemned in the strongest terms any practice that could undermine the rules and principles that guaranteed the smooth running of the members' work and cohesion of their conclusions. The Group therefore rejected the procedure used by the secretariat to amend the report on the programme budget for 2024 (A/AC.96/74/5), after it had been considered by the Standing Committee at its 88th meeting.

52. The Group reiterated its support for the work of UNHCR and wished to encourage donors to continue in their efforts to support refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons in Africa.

53. **Mr. Chuquihuara Chil** (Peru), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, said that, in the light of the global challenges underlying the unprecedented increase in the number of persons seeking international protection, the root causes of refugee movements must be recognized and addressed. Latin America and the Caribbean was one of the regions most affected by the situation. In 2023, the region had witnessed an increase in persons seeking alternative routes owing to the dangers they faced. To address what was a shared challenge, the Group wished to reaffirm the importance of complying with international law, including international refugee law and international human rights law, expanding solidarity and ensuring responsibility-sharing. Refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, the internally displaced and other persons of concern to UNHCR should not be viewed as a burden, but rather as a shared responsibility.

54. Latin America and the Caribbean had a long history of demonstrating solidarity and openness towards persons in need of international protection. Regional and subregional cooperation had facilitated dialogue, coordination and responsibility-sharing. However, given the current challenges, stronger international cooperation and support were needed. Addressing the movements of refugees and asylum-seekers required a broad approach that included not only measures to guarantee protection but also the mobilization of resources, including bilateral and multilateral financing for receiving States. Collaboration between development actors and host countries could serve as a model for promoting solutions to ease the plight of refugees.

55. Despite the global solidarity and support shown for refugees, in particular by low- and middle-income countries, where the vast majority were being hosted, there had been a worrying decrease in financial contributions to UNHCR. In the light of the proliferation of emergencies and the ongoing UNHCR reform process, the Group called upon all those member States that were able to do so to make additional efforts to support the Office's work through the timely provision of flexible, unearmarked funding. The Group also wished to stress the need for UNHCR to pursue greater efforts to facilitate durable solutions, including by identifying solutions from the outset of a situation involving persons who fell under its mandate, strengthening its work in countries of origin and exploring other solutions, such as resettlement and alternative routes. Eliminating the root causes of those situations, however, remained the most efficient way of achieving durable solutions.

56. With less than a decade to go to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the challenges were daunting, especially for developing countries. It was therefore vital to continue efforts towards finding durable solutions, including voluntary and dignified returns, and addressing the causes that led people to seek international protection, before 2030. It was time for the international community to intensify its efforts to promote collaborative management, with people at the centre. The Group urged member States to refrain from creating obstacles to international cooperation. Solidarity and cooperation were key to finding durable solutions and ensuring a better future for persons under the Office's mandate and host communities alike.

57. **Ms. Knudsen** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union and its member States wished to extend their condolences to Israel and its people. They stood

strong and united in their condemnation of terror, violence and the recent heinous attacks in that country.

58. The European Union and its member States were deeply concerned about the number of conflicts and natural disasters and the increasing magnitude and complexity of humanitarian crises. Since the start of the unprovoked and unjustified aggression by Russia against Ukraine, over 4 million people fleeing the war had received temporary protection from the European Union and its member States, providing them with access to essential services, including suitable accommodation, medical care and education. That temporary protection scheme had now been extended to March 2025.

59. The support of the European Union for Ukraine, however, had not diverted its attention from other displacement crises. In 2023, its total humanitarian budget had exceeded €2 billion, the majority of which had been earmarked for Africa and the Middle East. Each year, about 80 per cent of the budget was allocated to projects addressing the needs of forcibly displaced persons and host communities. Moreover, since 2020, some €3.5 billion had been disbursed to support refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities and to address the root causes of forced displacement.

60. The right to seek and enjoy asylum and the principle of non-refoulement remained at the heart of European law, policy and action. Between January and June 2023, member States had received more than 500,000 applications for asylum and granted protection status to around 182,000 asylum-seekers. Since 2015, resettlement programmes had helped more than 115,000 refugees to find protection in the European Union. Global endeavours to increase complementary pathways were encouraged, as were efforts for the social and economic inclusion of refugees. With that in mind, the second Global Refugee Forum represented an important stepping stone towards renewed commitment collectively to solve the plight of refugees.

61. In the light of the global challenges, the European Union and its member States appreciated and further encouraged the internal reform efforts of UNHCR, in particular with regard to its business transformation programme and to oversight. In that regard, regular updates on progress made and challenges faced would be welcomed. Similarly, they acknowledged and encouraged further efforts to broaden the Office's donor base to reduce the funding gap, including through prioritization. They reiterated their support for the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and for its independence in presenting its views to the membership in order to support all persons in vulnerable situations without discrimination. Lastly, they deeply appreciated the work and commitment of UNHCR, its staff and its partner organizations. They would continue to support its work and mandate politically as well as financially as part of its strong partnership with the Office.

62. **Mr. Durrani** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said that OIC countries hosted two thirds of the world's refugees. In recent years, intersecting crises, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, the global fuel and food shortage, and the financial crisis had exacerbated the scale, scope and complexity of refugee situations and jeopardized the hard-won development gains of several OIC countries hosting refugees. The impact of new conflicts and the funding of UNHCR were therefore areas of concern. OIC called upon the Office to sustain and enhance its support to host Governments and communities while continuing to pursue durable solutions.

63. The principles of international cooperation and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing were critical to ensuring holistic solutions and protection for refugees. The upcoming Global Refugee Forum was an opportunity to inspire equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, take stock of progress made and identify effective ways to address the root causes and triggers of forced displacement, including through political, security and development cooperation.

64. OIC welcomed the Office's advocacy work and partnership with development actors, including multilateral development banks and international financial institutions. However, there was a need to reconsider the new models of concessional finance.

65. It urged UNHCR to continue to measure the impact on host countries of assisting and supporting refugees, with a view to identifying gaps in international cooperation and finding solutions. OIC looked forward to continued dialogue with UNHCR on all controversial, non-consensual documents, concepts and terminology to ensure their alignment with international law, values and concepts. Lastly, OIC mourned the loss of innocent lives, including civilians in Gaza, many of them women and children, whose protection and safety should be of paramount concern.

66. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the Group was deeply concerned by the regrettable events in the Middle East, which were the result of a 70-year-long conflict that had left thousands of defenceless civilian victims from Israel and Palestine in its wake. In recent days, hundreds more victims had been added to that toll. The Group called for an immediate end to the violence and a renewed commitment to uphold the principles of international human rights law, in particular to protect civilians, especially women, children and older persons, on both sides of a conflict. The targeting of innocent civilians could not be justified on any grounds. The Group called for efforts to reach a peaceful settlement to be restarted, to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and to establish an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the 1967 borders and a two-State solution that would allow the two countries to live side by side in peace and security.

67. The Group was gravely concerned at the increasing number of displaced persons and refugees globally as a result of protracted conflicts and catastrophes. Developing countries hosted the vast majority of the total number of refugees. Countries of the Group had received and provided protection for refugees, in accordance with international human rights principles, despite the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global financial crisis. In the light of multiple crises in the region, some 17 million persons, half of them children, now came under the Office's mandate, as a result of which Arab host countries were shouldering huge economic, political and social responsibilities. The Group was therefore deeply concerned at the Office's budget shortfall, which only exacerbated the plight of asylum-seekers and refugees and increased the burden on host communities. The international community must join together to alleviate that burden and share the responsibility in a fair, responsible and humane manner, free of politicization.

68. The Group welcomed the role played by donor countries and, increasingly, the private sector in funding the Office. Arab donor countries would continue to provide funding to the Office on the basis of their belief in global solidarity. The Group called upon the international community to increase funding, including unearmarked contributions, for the Office's programmes and activities. In that connection, the Group was concerned at the dire situation in the Sudan and the impact that millions of refugees would have on neighbouring countries. It found it regrettable that only a third of pledges to the 2023 humanitarian response plan for the Sudan had been received.

69. The Group appreciated the High Commissioner's leadership and the efforts of the Office to support and provide protection for refugees and other persons under its mandate. There was a need to strengthen the humanitarian work of the Office and refrain from controversial concepts that could jeopardize the Office's activities and lead to further division. Similarly, non-consensual issues must be avoided in budget reports; solutions must be found that were agreeable to all parties.

70. The Group was well aware of the impact of climate change and its effect on population displacement. It was necessary to define refugees in accordance with international law and to distinguish between refugees and persons who were on the move for other reasons. A holistic approach was needed that addressed the root causes of the refugee crisis, such as through the peaceful settlement of conflicts, the combating of terrorism and the promotion of cooperation for peace, security and development.

71. **Mr. Stillhart** (Switzerland) said that humanitarian crises and disasters were increasing as a result of the escalation of violence in the Middle East, the conflicts in the Sudan and Nagorno-Karabakh, the earthquakes in Morocco and Afghanistan, and the deadly floods in Libya. The number of displaced persons had totalled 110 million in 2022, which was double the number recorded 10 years previously. The collective response was

undermined by the negative economic situation and by the fact that UNHCR and other agencies lacked the funds and flexibility that was required to meet basic needs. The system of urgent appeals prompted more and more stakeholders to make their support dependent on specific crises.

72. As a donor, Switzerland was striving not only to support UNHCR through more flexible contributions, but also to promote a more effective and efficient humanitarian system, for instance through its commitment to localization through the Grand Bargain.

73. Conflict prevention and resolution were the primary responsibility of political actors. It was also essential, in fragile settings, for the international community to adopt a more resolute approach based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, particularly in response to climate change, which could both cause and exacerbate forced displacement. The mechanisms for disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change needed to be reinforced within both States and humanitarian agencies.

74. Notwithstanding promising technical and digital advances, it would be impossible to address the current enormous challenges without greater political determination on the part of the international community. The next Global Refugee Forum would provide an exceptional opportunity to reaffirm the principle of international solidarity enshrined in the Global Compact on Refugees, not only between States but also between NGOs, civil society, cities, international financial institutions and, in particular, refugees themselves. Switzerland would include a refugee representative in its delegation and had made it possible for 86 refugee advisers to come to Geneva to participate in the Forum, which should give fresh impetus to the global efforts to support refugees and the countries that hosted them.

75. **Mr. Kazadi Kankonde** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the multiple and multifaceted crises throughout the world greatly impeded the mobilization of resources for the benefit of refugees. According to the latest statistics, more than 1 million Congolese refugees had been granted asylum, mainly in neighbouring countries and in southern Africa. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had granted asylum to 523,840 refugees and hosted about 6.2 million internally displaced persons. His Government was determined to revitalize the tripartite agreements concluded with UNHCR and the countries that hosted its citizens in order to facilitate their voluntary return in security and dignity. With that end in view, a ministerial meeting had been held in Geneva with Rwanda on 15 May 2023, a tripartite technical meeting of experts had been held in Nairobi on 26 and 27 June 2023, and a cross-border meeting had been held in Goma on 19 and 20 October 2023.

76. His Government called on the international community to give special attention to the problems of the 523,840 refugees currently living in the country and support for the communities that were making enormous sacrifices to host them. Only about 35 per cent of the requisite budget of \$232,580,904 had currently been disbursed. The open-door policy for individuals or groups seeking asylum that his country had been implementing since 1960 had had adverse environmental, socioeconomic and political effects, as was the case with the Rwandan refugee crisis in 1994.

77. The Democratic Republic of the Congo would participate in the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum and in the parallel high-level event concerning the support platform to address the situation in the Central African Republic to be held in Geneva in December 2023, where it would take stock of the commitments made at the previous Forum in 2019.

78. **Mr. Dačić** (Serbia) said that Serbia was grateful to the Office for its assistance in implementing the regional housing programme aimed at providing permanent housing solutions for refugees and persons displaced during the conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The housing needs of 7,495 of the most vulnerable refugee families had been met thanks to the programme.

79. The number of persons who had been forced to flee from their homes in Kosovo and Metohija due to ethnic hatred totalled 210,284, the majority of whom were Serbs, as well as other non-Albanian communities – the Roma, Ashkali and Gorani communities. According to UNHCR data on voluntary repatriation, 12,707 internally displaced persons had returned to Kosovo and Metohija. Such a low number of returnees was disappointing, especially in the light of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Internally displaced

persons were unable to exercise their basic right to choose between local integration and sustainable return, because more than 20 years after the deployment of the international presence in Kosovo and Metohija, the necessary guarantees of security of person and property, the rule of law, non-discrimination and respect for basic human and civil rights had not been provided.

80. Serbia was committed to providing care for persons who had been forced to leave their homes for fear of their safety and were fleeing towards European countries along the so-called Balkan route. Almost 2,300 persons were currently housed in reception centres and centres for asylum-seekers.

81. Serbia had provided Ukrainian refugees with temporary protection and material assistance, health care, and the right to employment and education. In addition, donations had been provided through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR, and a summer school to help children from Ukraine recover had been organized.

82. The issue of forced displacement required a global solution and joint action based on the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing as well as the principles of humaneness and solidarity.

83. **Mr. Guadalupe** (Observer for Sao Tome and Principe) said that disadvantaged persons, refugees and internally displaced persons were at the epicentre of persistent international conflicts throughout the world. Global action was necessary to redress the imbalances and inequalities promoted by war and cross-border conflicts. World leaders were unable to promote effective global peace and continued to experience misunderstandings that were incompatible with a world facing major social and economic challenges. It was therefore essential to guarantee the human rights enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

84. Sao Tome and Principe had assumed the rotating presidency of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa in May 2023. It had undertaken to promote the recognition of the international legal status of stateless persons and the development of a regional strategy that aimed at community development for refugees. In September 2023, his Government had submitted to the legislature four instruments for ratification for that purpose, namely the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

85. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that the Sudan had cooperated with UNHCR by welcoming millions of refugees and displaced persons since 1968. It had enacted laws to protect refugees and established a Commission for Refugees.

86. However, the rebellion launched by the Rapid Support Forces on 15 April 2023 had targeted ministries, hospitals, health-care facilities, educational institutions, Christian and Muslim places of worship and diplomatic missions. The militia had also attacked the UNHCR office, forced citizens to leave their homes under the threat of gunfire, and occupied various districts of Khartoum. As a result, there were currently almost 5 million displaced persons and refugees in the country. The Sudan had therefore appealed to the General Assembly to designate the Rapid Support Forces as a terrorist organization.

87. He thanked the countries that had hosted Sudanese citizens, particularly Egypt, Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic, and commended the Office on its support for persons requiring humanitarian assistance within the country in cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Yet pledges by donors to the humanitarian response plan for the Sudan had reached only 27 per cent. His Government therefore appealed to the international community to provide the necessary funds in order to alleviate the suffering of displaced persons and refugees in the spirit of burden-sharing.

88. Following the outbreak of the crisis, the Government had established a Supreme Committee for Crisis Management, chaired by the Prime Minister, to coordinate and facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations. However, the systematic sabotage of Sudanese institutions by the rebel forces had created major logistical challenges for the Committee.

While the Sudan appreciated the action taken by some countries to host Sudanese refugees, it hoped that greater flexibility would be displayed in hosting refugees in the future, and that all countries would respect the principles of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and allow the free passage into their territories of persons affected by the conflict.

89. **Ms. Rouamba** (Burkina Faso) said that, while she appreciated the strides made by the Office in responding to the major humanitarian challenges facing the world, she remained concerned about the huge gap between the needs of forcibly displaced persons and the resources available to address those needs. The unprecedented security crisis in Burkina Faso and in the central Sahel region in recent years had continued to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, which had had a tremendous impact on States with limited resources as host countries and countries of transit and return. Repeated terrorist attacks had led to a growing number of internally displaced persons.

90. Nonetheless, Burkina Faso continued to show resilience by responding to the needs of forcibly displaced persons, in accordance with its international obligations and with the support of its technical and financial partners, including the Office. It continued to register refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons, to provide them with civil status and identity documents, and to seek durable solutions for the humanitarian crisis.

91. The Government had set up a chair in forced displacement in West Africa at Joseph Ki-Zerbo University to undertake academic research and thus bolster its response to the problems of persons who were internally displaced as a result of terrorist violence. The Government was also reviewing its domestic legal framework governing the rights of asylum-seekers and stateless persons to bring it into line with international protection standards. Amendments to the Persons and Family Code and the enactment of a bill on civil status would help to combat statelessness. In addition, the Transition Action Plan 2022–2025 adopted by the Government focused on activities aimed at assisting and ensuring the safety and recovery of internally displaced persons.

92. **Mr. Buzu** (Republic of Moldova) said that he commended the High Commissioner for his leadership and support since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine and the onset of the refugee crisis there. He greatly appreciated the dedication and commitment shown by the Office in dealing with the multiple crises that Moldova had faced. He also wished to thank other United Nations agencies and civil society organizations and to highlight the support offered by the United States, the European Union, Norway, Japan, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, France, Germany and Italy.

93. His Government reaffirmed its support for Ukrainian refugees. Many of them were currently employed as social workers, health-care providers and teachers, or had set up businesses and launched civic initiatives in local communities. Further action would be taken to enhance their role in Moldovan society with the assistance of the international community.

94. **Mr. Onek** (Uganda) said that Uganda was hosting 1.5 million refugees, more than at any time in its history. Of that number about 7,000 were new arrivals. His Government had continued to leave its doors open to refugees because it firmly believed that, when people sought safety and security, they deserved protection. That open-door policy was founded on the principles of a shared humanity and pan-Africanism and the relevant national, regional, and international instruments.

95. Refugees in Uganda had access to national services and progress had been made with their integration in the national planning and service delivery systems. To facilitate and inform a meaningful response to refugees' needs, their numbers required regular annual verification. With thousands of refugees continuing to flee to Uganda, their needs were growing larger. Despite its own resource constraints, his Government was investing over \$1.2 billion annually in hosting refugees. While it appreciated the role and support of international partners, humanitarian support was chronically underfunded and was on a downward spiral. That tendency was affecting efforts to protect and assist refugees.

96. Underfunding was worsened by the growing trend of earmarking funds for a specific region or country or programmes. Earmarking funds undermined the humanitarian response and negatively affected the timely and needs-based response by UNHCR. His Government

was not earmarking any funds for a particular group of refugees. Only 32 per cent of the \$343.4 million budget set aside for the 2023 country refugee response had been funded. That was far below minimum requirements. The steady decrease in humanitarian funding since 2015 coupled with a further 70 per cent cut in food supplied by WFP had led to a situation where refugees in Uganda were fed on 10 cents a day. As a result, they were becoming malnourished and were trying to find another host country. As a consequence, over the previous five months, Uganda had rescued a total of over 2,200 refugees, who had crossed to other countries but had been sent back to Uganda. Over 5,000 refugees were currently on their way back to Uganda after failing to obtain asylum or humanitarian assistance elsewhere. Experience had shown that voluntary repatriation remained the most durable solution in the region, as there was little third-country resettlement. Funding and support for repatriation programmes was therefore important. He trusted that the Global Refugee Forum 2023 would produce durable solutions, especially for protracted situations like that of Uganda.

97. Millions of people were being uprooted from their homes owing to natural disasters and extreme weather conditions. There was a close nexus between climate change and human displacement. Climate change and financing were clearly matters deserving attention. Furthermore, support was needed for mitigation measures to address the adverse effects of climate change in refugee settings.

98. As a principle, Uganda was committed to building consensus and ensuring balance in the Executive Committee's work, as reflected in outcome documents. His delegation was therefore concerned by recent unilateral steps by UNHCR to amend the report on the programme budget of 2024 after it had been considered and the 88th meeting of the Standing Committee had adopted a consensual decision on it. The views of African States deserved to be reflected. As one of the co-convenors of the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, Uganda remained committed to its international obligations and responsibilities and it called on all international partners to do likewise. It was to be hoped that the Forum would raise both the quality and the amount of quantifiable pledges so as to lessen the burden on host countries.

99. **Ms. Noyes** (United States of America) said that she wished to express sympathy for those killed in the earthquake in Afghanistan and for the innocent civilian lives lost in Israel and Gaza owing to the attacks by Hamas terrorists.

100. With humanitarian aid budgets struggling to keep pace with worldwide needs, the upcoming Global Refugee Forum must be used to prioritize action and commit to new working methods. Her Government had reached deep into its reserves to maintain its long history of generous humanitarian funding. It was proud to remain the largest single donor to UNHCR and had provided over \$1.8 billion in the 2022 fiscal year. However, as money was not enough to face increasingly complex and intractable humanitarian emergencies, her Government had launched several new initiatives to support refugees and stateless persons. Refugee resettlement lay at the heart of its foreign policy, since its proud history of resettlement was a concrete demonstration of solidarity with refugees and host countries and a beacon of hope for persecuted people. Hard work had been done to modernize the United States Refugees Admissions Program. In 2022 the United States had resettled refugees from every region in the world and in 2024 it would be able to receive the unprecedented figure of 125,000 refugee arrivals a month. Her Government's work to innovate programmes and policies demonstrated its ongoing commitment to refugees and stateless persons everywhere.

101. Those innovations included the launching of a new initiative, the Welcome Corps, which was a private sponsorship programme to empower Americans to welcome refugees, from Venezuelans in need of international protection, to Sudanese who had been newly displaced, to Rohingya refugees facing increased threats, and to support their integration as they built new lives in the United States. She was proud that American citizens could contribute directly to life-saving and life-sustaining efforts.

102. On the margins of the high-level week of the General Assembly, the United States and the World Economic Forum had jointly called on humanitarian and development organizations, donors and host Governments, development finance institutions, foundations, investors, and corporations to join forces to mobilize \$10 billion in investment capital. That partnership would enable 1,000 businesses to enter or scale up activities in fragile frontier markets, including many that hosted refugees, by 2030. That call to action formed the

cornerstone of her Government's efforts to innovate, to work with new partners, and to leverage diplomacy toward solutions to protracted humanitarian situations.

103. Her Government was also looking at new ways to combine humanitarian and development financing to meet the needs of refugees and host communities. For example, it was partnering with Kenya, where some 600,000 refugees lived in camps in Kakuma and Dadaab, some of the most underdeveloped parts of the country, in which recurring drought and the mounting effects of climate change had affected both displaced and host communities. The new refugee law and pending regulations of Kenya provided an opening to see if, in fact, it was possible to do business differently. However, partnering with the private sector, looking at innovative financing mechanisms and concentrating on multilateral development bank reform did not constitute an effort to scale back humanitarian aid, but rather to expand the toolbox, partnerships and approaches to meet growing needs in a challenging environment.

104. In December 2023, the United States would call on the Global Refugee Forum to look beyond traditional humanitarian donors and organizations and to appeal to a broader coalition of development agencies, private sector actors, civil society and refugees themselves to provide a more sustainable response and a novel approach to humanitarian and refugee crises.

105. **Mr. Naeem** (United States of America) said that, since the establishment of the Executive Committee in 1958, refugees had looked to it and the broader humanitarian protection system to realize a new beginning for their lives and families – one that guaranteed protection, freedom of speech and expression and a pathway toward social and economic opportunity. In short, refugees sought to belong. That had been the dream of his parents, who had fled Afghanistan during the 1980s, and were later welcomed by the generosity of the United States.

106. The United States Refugee Advisory Board strongly believed that embracing the leadership and lived expertise of refugees was mission-critical in addressing the multifaceted challenges of displaced populations worldwide. The Board stood ready to work with the Executive Committee to harness the unique perspectives of forcibly displaced people and build a global system that met the demands of a shared future, while upholding the full spirit that lay behind the founding of the Committee.

107. **Mr. Moyo** (Zimbabwe) said that the unprecedented movement of people owing to various challenges such as climate change, natural disasters and conflict called for a concerted effort to mitigate their effects through sustainable financing and the investment in peacebuilding initiatives worldwide. His Government had continued to implement programmes that promoted and protected the rights of persons of concern in fulfilment of the commitments made in the various international conventions and instruments to which Zimbabwe was a party. In various ways, it had recalibrated its systems to realize the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees, as Zimbabwe was a peace-loving and hospitable country which would maintain an open-door policy and welcome the refugees and asylum-seekers in line with the African philosophy that recognized the importance of respecting humanity. It currently hosted some 22,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, of whom some 15,000 which were accommodated in the refugee facility in the east of the country. Zimbabwe, acting in partnership with WFP, ensured that refugees and asylum-seekers domiciled in Zimbabwe enjoyed food security. In June 2023, his Government had donated 4,400 metric tons of maize to the refugee facility under that partnership, while WFP had covered the cost of transport, storage, milling and fortification of the maize. The donation of that food had been made in recognition of the fact that the funding of food aid for refugees was limited and in response to the Secretary-General's call for pledges of contributions to humanitarian assistance. In order to boost food security at the facility and create livelihoods for those who lived there, the Government was allocating some 150 ha of irrigated land and expanding existing educational facilities. However, additional funding was required to construct additional decent housing units.

108. Although donor Governments' contributions had reached record levels in 2022, the gap between humanitarian needs and funding continued to widen. That dire funding crisis affected the education, shelter and health services that could be offered by way of protection to refugees. He therefore called on donors and UNHCR to allocate more resources to

countries already facing other challenges, such as unilateral coercive measures that hindered States' ability fully to protect persons of concern. There was a need to depoliticize humanitarian assistance and to focus on life-saving initiatives all over the world, with particular attention going to the Sahrawi people in the sadly neglected Western Sahara. Zimbabwe shared the concerns about the unilateral amendment of the report on the programme budget for 2024 after it had been agreed at the 88th meeting of the Standing Committee and deplored the fact that some delegations had brought pressure to bear for the inclusion of language that had not been universally agreed. He urged the secretariat always to be neutral and to resist such pressure whatever their source.

109. His delegation deeply appreciated the tireless work done by the High Commissioner and his team to protect people of concern. He paid tribute to staff members who had lost their lives in the humanitarian field. Zimbabwe cherished the excellent relationship it enjoyed with UNHCR and other United Nations Agencies and development partners which had continued to support refugees and asylum-seekers in his country.

110. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the number of crises, and the need for further resources on the African continent meant that it remained very much of a priority for UNHCR. African countries displayed the greatest generosity towards refugees. His Office would endeavour to compensate as much as possible for the worrying drop in humanitarian contributions and to cooperate more closely with development agencies. He had taken note of the dilemma facing African countries when they had to choose between security and the protection of refugees. The upcoming Global Refugee Forum would attempt to find ways of ensuring that security and refugee protection could be complementary.

111. The tradition of hosting and integrating refugees in Latin American and Caribbean States set an example for the rest of the world and deserved more support from the international community. It was important in a region that experienced complex mixed flows of refugees moving alongside migrants that the international community should focus on what could be done at each step of the long routes that were used, not only some elements of the phenomenon, and that required international cooperation. The fortieth anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees would be celebrated on the eve of the upcoming Global Refugee Forum and would serve as introduction to all the subjects that would be discussed at the Forum.

112. He thanked the European Union and its member States for their support. His Office would continue its constructive dialogue with them in order to ensure that resources were made available promptly and flexibly, with a particular focus on Africa. It would likewise pursue its cooperation with them in matters of asylum and resettlement. He fervently hoped that the new pact on migration and asylum would be adopted in the near future because it would then set a good example for other regions.

113. He recognized that the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference included donors, hosts and countries of origin. Burden- and responsibility-sharing would be a central theme of the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum. He took note of the point raised about the complexity of World Bank loans, which was something that his Office should discuss with that international financial institution.

114. He fully endorsed the appeal for swift conflict resolution that Egypt had made on behalf of the Arab Group. He hoped that the terrible war that had erupted once more in the Middle East might provide an opportunity for finally bringing to an end one of the longest conflicts that had plagued humanity for decades. His Office would, of course, continue to support efforts to reach peace and end the refugee crisis in the Sudan. He strongly appealed to donors in the Arab Group to continue and increase predictable funding for humanitarian and refugee operations.

115. He welcomed the new approaches to assisting with refugee resettlement outlined by the representative of the United States of America and endorsed the joint call to action to which she had referred. Investment in fragile areas that hosted refugees was a step towards finding solutions to several problems. The Global Refugee Forum itself brought together States, international organizations and many other actors in a search for new approaches, resources and technology.

116. He thanked Switzerland for hosting UNHCR and the Global Refugee Forum and for providing technical support in a number of fields.

117. He had visited the Republic of Moldova in January 2023 and had been able to see for himself the enormous and exemplary progress made there in hosting refugees from Ukraine. He was glad that the Serbian housing programme for refugees had achieved good results. His Office had been working with Serbia to improve its ability to cope with complex movements of people along the Balkan route. It would also continue to work with the Government of Serbia in providing support for displaced persons from Kosovo.

118. He welcomed the statement by the representative from Sao Tome and Principe that his Government had ratified four major conventions. That must be a record.

119. He was thankful that the authorities of Zimbabwe had reacted proactively and creatively to the reduction in food aid by contributing their own resources. Its efforts in that respect deserved international support.

120. Responsibility-sharing did indeed need to be expanded so that host countries were not left to cope on their own with the refugees in their territory. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was certainly extremely complex with displaced persons coming from neighbouring countries and from within the country itself. He was pleased to note the reference to the tripartite declarations concluded between UNHCR and the countries which had hosted its nationals.

121. His Office had a field presence in Burkina Faso, where great efforts were needed to solve the multidimensional crisis and address the worrying security situation, which impeded access to some areas of the country and therefore exacerbated the plight of displaced persons.

122. Uganda was the African country hosting the largest number of refugees. He fully agreed that resources to meet their needs were a challenge. While he was proud that it had proved possible to mobilize substantial development resources, more needed to be done to increase humanitarian funding.

123. His Office was very concerned about the current situation in the Sudan. The impact of the conflict on civilians was catastrophic. He therefore trusted that the Government and the parties to the conflict were endeavouring to speed up efforts to reach a ceasefire and restore peace. In the meantime, it was vital that the authorities facilitated the activities of the humanitarian agencies.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.