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Summary record of the 659th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 2 October 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Knutsson.....(Sweden)

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

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Smorodin** (Russian Federation) welcomed the work of international agencies assisting victims of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and called for the agencies to be given access to refugees in neighbouring countries. His Government was providing international assistance bilaterally and through international organizations and had donated millions of dollars to humanitarian programmes for the Syrian Arab Republic.
2. The additional pledges made by the Russian Federation at the 2011 Ministerial Meeting were reflected in a presidential concept paper on State migration policy focusing essentially on improving the system for granting refugee status, supporting voluntary return, creating a favourable environment for sociocultural integration of forced migrants and developing a social support programme. The Russian Federation was continuing to improve its refugee legislation, and a network of temporary housing centres for asylum seekers was being set up and the documentation system modernized. In addition, after a year, recognized refugees could initiate citizenship procedures. His country worked with neighbouring countries on protection for refugees in the region.
3. **Mr. Gurdov** (Turkmenistan) said that Turkmenistan had acceded to both conventions on statelessness and had developed a programme to register asylum seekers and refugees. In 2005, some 13,000 refugees had been granted citizenship or final citizenship status and 2,000 had received refugee status; more than 800 had been granted residence.
4. The Government had developed a project under which more than 3,000 stateless persons had been granted citizenship. Biometric documentation had been developed for stateless persons and a project to provide citizenship to stateless persons and refugees temporarily resident in Turkmenistan had been established. Legislation had been adopted on the legal status of foreigners, refugees and migrants.
5. Turkmenistan had hosted the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ministerial Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World in May 2012.
6. **Mr. Orgiako** (Nigeria) said that the terrorization of innocent people in Nigeria by Boko Haram had led to the displacement of many people and that the political crisis in the Sahel was a challenge to Governments of the region. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) needed the support of the international community to build capacity to stabilize the situation in northern Mali. Given the multidimensional nature of refugee crises, the global community should take a holistic approach to addressing their root causes. It should focus on conflict-resolution strategies, increased access to information and disaster early warning systems and controlling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that helped to fuel crises in Africa.
7. **Ms. Kairamo-Hella** (Finland) said that her Government was pleased with the increased cooperation with NGO partners, who must be recognized as true partners in action. She welcomed UNHCR efforts to set up innovative partnerships through processes such as the Transitional Solutions Initiative and to find ways of linking relief to development. She would be glad to know what impact the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the adoption of country compacts would have on the work of UNHCR at the country level. What opportunities or risks would the new approach entail?
8. Advancing the implementation of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) had been a major priority for Finland. Only one more ratification was needed for the Convention to

enter into force, and she would be interested to learn how UNHCR planned to support its subsequent implementation.

9. Finland would continue to make its un-earmarked core contribution on a multi-annual basis, subject to parliamentary approval. Its total support to UNHCR in 2012 would amount to at least €18 million.

10. **Mr. Nchimbi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his country continued to host some 100,000 refugees and sincerely appreciated the cooperation and support provided by UNHCR in its search for durable solutions. In September 2011, in collaboration with UNHCR, it had conducted interviews with refugees in the Mtabila camp. Some 2,400 refugees identified as being in continuing need of international protection had been relocated to another camp. The remaining 38,050 Burundian refugees had been found to be no longer in need of international protection and a decision had been taken to invoke the cessation clause. The refugees had until the end of 2012 to return home. His country had met its obligations under the Convention and now called on all stakeholders to facilitate the repatriation of those persons by 31 December 2012.

11. On the question of citizenship for 1,972 Burundian refugees, his Government was seeking an integration solution that would accommodate the interests of all parties.

12. **Mr. Smidt** (Denmark) said that the implementation of the Transformative Agenda would require perseverance and determination. Effective communication of the commitment to the Transformative Agenda needed to be ensured with UNHCR field offices. He commended the recent UNHCR decision to mobilize a tri-cluster coordinator in Mogadishu to improve the joint response in two large IDP settlements. Denmark encouraged UNHCR to commit to the timely release of funds to NGOs from the Central Emergency Response Fund.

13. One priority issue for the Danish Government was the link between humanitarian and development assistance. In that regard, UNHCR and development agencies should explore innovative modes of cooperation. The Transitional Solutions Initiative, for example, had the potential to break new ground. His Government was more than willing to support such initiatives. He said that donors were showing renewed interest in strengthening the resilience of communities and authorities in fragile States. That could provide a platform for engaging development partners in support of durable solutions.

14. **Ms. Thabit Al-Hubaishi** (Yemen) said that there were currently 750,000 refugees and 600,000 IDPs in Yemen. Although the country generously welcomed refugees, daily influxes only added to the heavy humanitarian and security burden that the Government already bore. Her Government was trying to help Somalia find political solutions to its problems and to reconcile the various groups.

15. Yemen afforded refugees equal treatment on a par with Yemeni nationals. Refugee children were able to attend school and refugees had access to health services and were exempt from paying residence tax.

16. **Mr. Kaiyamo** (Namibia) said that as at 30 June 2012 Namibia had had a total of 8,272 refugees, mostly from Angola. Some 2,761 Angolan refugees had been repatriated, and he wished to express appreciation to Angola for having created an environment conducive to their return. Namibia had allowed 159 schoolchildren who had not been able to leave with their parents to remain and to continue with their studies. It was now forming community-based committees to register stateless persons.

17. **Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (China) said that the international community should tackle the root causes of refugee problems and pursue joint development initiatives and that the pledges that China had made at the 2011 Ministerial Meeting were now being implemented. Since the 1970s, China had received 700,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and the country was

continuing its efforts to improve their living and working conditions. It was also pressing on with the adoption of refugee legislation.

18. In order to bring calm to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, China had made a cash contribution of US\$ 3 million in international emergency aid and had decided to deliver 15 million yuan in emergency relief to Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. China had also provided emergency relief food and medicine to Mali.

19. **Mr. Cucić** (Serbia) said that Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia had established the Joint Regional Housing Programme, which would resolve the housing needs of 45,000 of the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs in Serbia. He expressed gratitude to the international community for its solidarity and readiness to share that considerable burden. Serbia would make every effort to ensure that the resources were used effectively.

20. He drew attention to the needs of over 210,000 IDPs from Kosovo and Metohija not included in the regional project, of whom some 97,000 were extremely vulnerable. To date, only 1.9 per cent of IDPs had returned to Kosovo and Metohija under sustainable conditions. Serbia was using all available resources to improve living conditions for the displaced but needed additional funding and international assistance for that endeavour.

21. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees), responding to the points raised, said that he was encouraged by the news from the Russian Federation concerning its concept paper and refugees' access to citizenship. He was very grateful to the Government of Turkmenistan for organizing the Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World and commended it on integrating refugees following the break-up of the Soviet Union and for resolving problems of statelessness. The representative of Nigeria had mentioned the need for a holistic approach to addressing root causes; prevention was the key, yet that was something the international community had not always been able to provide. ECOWAS, however, had a long tradition in that regard.

22. In reply to the questions from Finland, he said that efforts were being made to integrate the outcome of the Busan conference on the New Deal for Fragile States, notably through cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. UNHCR was deeply committed to implementation of the Kampala Convention and had already strengthened its capacities in Darfur and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

23. It was to be hoped that there would be close cooperation between the Burundian Government, the United Republic of Tanzania and UNHCR to enable those persons not in need of protection to return home. Some returns might not be voluntary but he hoped they would not be violent.

24. While the strategic dialogue between UNHCR and NGOs should help improve cooperation mechanisms, work with NGO partners had not been affected by the savings made in 2012. Denmark had been a pioneer in bridging the gap between relief and development. He hoped for enhanced cooperation with Denmark to find new ways to strengthen fragile communities' resilience and bring development actors into the process at an earlier stage. He commended Yemen for its consistent generosity. Regardless of the difficulties it faced, it had always shared its resources. UNHCR was committed to working with the Yemeni Government to protect the refugees and IDPs in the country.

25. He agreed with the representative of China that, ideally, the international community should address the root causes of displacement and work together in international solidarity. He welcomed the excellent cooperation of the Serbian authorities, which had contributed to the regional housing programme, and said that UNHCR would continue to lobby for full funding of the programme. Owing to a lack of funding, UNHCR had been unable to

provide Serbia with all the support it would have wished to help it protect and assist IDPs from Kosovo. The Office was still committed to that project and hoped to be able to provide more assistance in future.

26. **Mr. Kunakorn** (Thailand) deplored the violence against civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic and said that his country was providing an immediate financial contribution to meet the needs of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Among other things, his Government had recently been working with UNHCR to address the issue of statelessness, including through promoting best practices in birth registration.

27. The rapid developments unfolding in Myanmar would make it easier to identify solutions for the 140,000 displaced persons from Myanmar currently in his country. He recognized the efforts of UNHCR to make progress in discussions among different stakeholders, particularly given the need to prepare the policy groundwork for possible return. Since that appeared to be the preferred solution, his Government had started to discuss the matter with the authorities in Myanmar. However, it did not wish to rush the process and would continue to provide shelter while negotiating the safe and sustainable return of those in need. It would also continue to improve conditions in the nine temporary shelters along the border and to deliver capacity-building, skills training, education and health care. The authorities would continue to facilitate third-country resettlement as another viable alternative.

28. **Mr. Corr** (Ireland) said that the crises the world had witnessed in 2012 had highlighted the generosity of States that kept their borders open, even in the face of large-scale displacement. They had also revealed significant practical challenges in securing humanitarian access and in delivering interventions to prevent or reduce the scale of displacement. The political causes of the crises could not be resolved without political engagement from national, regional and global actors.

29. More than two thirds of refugees of concern to UNHCR lived in prolonged exile, many of them in the developing world. Worldwide, daunting protection challenges remained, including gender-based violence and the vulnerabilities of displaced children. He commended UNHCR for its work in those and many other fields, as well as its record in nominating high-calibre candidates for Humanitarian Coordinator posts. He encouraged UNHCR to ensure that Transformative Agenda commitments were reflected in its operational approach and to promote effective leadership, enhanced accountability and improved and coordinated delivery of assistance across the humanitarian system.

30. **Mr. Sandoval Zambrano** (Ecuador) said that, as of September 2012, Ecuador had registered almost 56,000 refugees, 98 per cent of whom were Colombian. The free movement of foreigners was guaranteed under the Ecuadorian Constitution; refugees in his country lived in the community, not in camps. Providing international protection for Colombian citizens fleeing violence in their country was a matter of principle and of respect for human rights. Ecuador had provided refugee status to citizens of over 70 States to date.

31. His Government would support efforts to ensure that the Colombian Victims and Land Restitution Law benefited Colombian refugees living in Ecuador. It called for more political and financial support from the international community for projects for Colombian refugees in Ecuador and efforts to promote their resettlement. The durable solutions available should include secure and dignified voluntary return to Colombia and assistance in labour market reintegration. Ecuador applauded the establishment of an office on the southern border of Colombia to facilitate the repatriation and voluntary return of Colombian citizens. His Government was also working to facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum seekers who wished to remain in the country. It considered that the scope of the third-country resettlement programme should be expanded.

32. **Mr. Malam** (Observer for Niger) said that Niger hosted some 60,000 people who had fled the crisis in Mali. His Government had made every effort to promote and protect the rights of those persons and of refugees from elsewhere in the region. The National Commission on Eligibility for Refugee Status provided the necessary legal and institutional framework for the realization of that objective.

33. His country's partnership with UNHCR had remained strong in 2012, with visits from both the High Commissioner and the Chairperson. In spite of the domestic difficulties caused by a food crisis, several conflicts in the region and the recent disastrous floods, the Government had accepted the Malian refugees and undertaken to protect their rights. However, Niger faced significant challenges, such as how to improve living conditions in camps, protect refugees and guarantee them access to drinking water, health care and education. He thanked UNHCR and the many other actors that supported refugee protection efforts in Niger.

34. **Mr. Koffi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that refugees and vulnerable groups played an important role in social reconstruction in his country. Their participation was necessary after more than a decade of crises and violence that had led to massive population displacements both in and outside the country. The Ivorian authorities were doing their utmost to facilitate returns and voluntary repatriation of refugees. The Government had concluded tripartite agreements with UNHCR and countries hosting Ivorian refugees, notably Ghana, Liberia and Togo. The number of Ivorian refugees displaced throughout the subregion in 2010 had now fallen by one third, as had the number of refugees in Côte d'Ivoire owing to the application of the cessation clause with respect to Liberian refugees.

35. The Government had taken steps to improve the situation of IDPs, returnees and people at risk of statelessness and was in the process of ratifying the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. However, significant humanitarian challenges remained in terms of housing, poverty, and refugee management and resettlement. He called on humanitarian agencies to assist, especially with microfinance projects.

36. **Mr. Sukayri** (Jordan) commended the High Commissioner for his work and for his efforts to increase coordination between humanitarian agencies. He said that his Government continued to support UNHCR and its pioneering role in addressing refugee issues, but still viewed voluntary return as the best solution.

37. He said that over 200,000 Syrians had fled to Jordan since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis. Despite the severe pressure on its limited resources, Jordan had kept its borders open. However, greater international support was urgently required to meet the needs of an increasing number of refugees, particularly with the onset of the cold winter. He appealed for greater cooperation from the international community and more coordination between the international agencies and host States in order to prevent a humanitarian tragedy.

38. Jordan had received several influxes of refugees and IDPs from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and from Iraq over the decades. He appealed to donor countries to increase their contribution and thus share the burden shouldered by Jordan in protecting the many refugees in its territory.

39. **Mr. Moraru** (Republic of Moldova) said that his country had set up coherent and efficient mechanisms and institutions to protect refugees and asylum seekers. That task had proved to be a real challenge owing to the protracted internal conflict that had left the country's eastern border largely unguarded. Moreover, his country had suddenly become a country of transit and destination for many refugees and asylum seekers. The Government had, nonetheless, adopted landmark legislation under which other categories of asylum seekers could benefit from complementary protection. UNHCR had provided valuable technical assistance throughout that process.

40. The Government was now strengthening existing refugee protection mechanisms. In July 2012, it had adopted legislation on the social integration of refugees and persons benefiting from subsidiary protection in the country. It had also implemented a local integration project under the Regional Protection Support Programme. In addition, housing for refugees and asylum seekers had been renovated in 2012 and efforts were being made to issue travel documents to refugees and beneficiaries of humanitarian protection.

41. **Ms. Menéñez Pérez** (Spain) said that, in 2012, the world had seen how the political violence unleashed on the Syrian civilian population had led to massive displacement of persons towards Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. She commended those host countries for keeping their borders open, respecting the principle of non-refoulement and generously hosting the Syrian refugees.

42. In the Sahel region, political instability and an upsurge in the activities of armed groups, against the backdrop of the chronic food crisis, had resulted in huge refugee outflows towards regions where resources were already scarce. Both refugees and host countries suffered in those circumstances. The international community should therefore ensure a truly coordinated approach to those crises, especially in the light of the current global economic crisis. She welcomed the commitment of UNHCR to the Transformative Agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and encouraged the Office to contribute high-calibre leaders. Spain and UNHCR had signed a framework agreement on strategic association for the period 2011–2012 and UNHCR had a permanent seat on the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Asylum and Refuge in Spain. Her Government was preparing to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

43. **Mr. de Crombrughe de Picquendaele** (Belgium) said that his country had increased its contributions to UNHCR in recent years, particularly of un-earmarked funds. The Belgian authorities recognized the generosity of host countries, especially those that accepted massive inflows of refugees. The social, economic and environmental impact of such population movements should not be underestimated.

44. His Government was particularly concerned at the situation of IDPs and refugees in the Great Lakes Region. The resurgence of violence in the province of Nord-Kivu had led to the displacement of many people, some of whom had found refuge in Rwanda and Uganda. However, many more remained in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and were in need of assistance and protection. He furthermore urged all parties to ensure that the residents of the Mtabila camp in the United Republic of Tanzania were able to return to Burundi in safety and dignity and had access to a decent standard of living once they had been resettled.

45. **Mr. Minty** (South Africa) said that his country was committed to contributing to a world where no persons were left stateless owing to the redefinition of political borders, non-registration of children at birth or the repudiation or non-recognition of citizenship of groups of peoples. To that end, in September 2012, it had hosted the second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. South Africa had introduced civil registration frameworks through the 2011 Refugee Amendment Act, which would help to minimize the problem of statelessness.

46. In South Africa, refugees were integrated into local communities, were eligible to receive social assistance and enjoyed the same constitutionally protected rights as citizens. Measures were under way to improve immigration management: mechanisms were being put into place to monitor and respond to the challenges of mixed migration flows and improve the protection of asylum seekers and refugees. South Africa was actively involved in efforts to harmonize refugee legislation within the South African Development Community, to enhance refugee protection systems and to build capacity in the management of irregular migration.

47. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked the Government of Thailand for the hospitality that it had shown him and commended it on its attitude towards the refugees from Myanmar as well as its efforts towards the reduction of statelessness. He said that he wished to acknowledge that Ireland maintained its contributions of international aid despite being subject to severe austerity measures. He commended Ecuador on promoting conditions conducive to the integration of refugees and furthering their rights. He commended Niger on its swift reaction to the Malian refugee crisis and its considerable generosity in the face of enormous challenges and said that UNHCR recognized the problems raised by the delegation of Niger. He wished Côte d'Ivoire every success in its democracy and peace-building process and acknowledged that statelessness was a complex issue for that country. He expressed his deep appreciation to Jordan for its long-standing open-border policy and said that he had been tremendously impressed by the welcoming attitude of army personnel stationed on that country's borders. Despite the dramatic domestic impact of crises in surrounding countries, Jordan was a pillar of stability and deserved international support.

48. UNHCR was grateful to Spain for its participation in resettlement programmes and hoped that it would continue to treat resettlement as a burden-sharing measure. He thanked the Government of Belgium for its increasing support for UNHCR and its unfailing interest in situations that tended to be forgotten. He said that South Africa had for many years been the country that received the most asylum seekers in the world and that UNHCR appreciated the country's commitment to regional cooperation.

49. **Monsignor Tomasi** (Holy See) said that it would be a tragedy if violence and food speculation should hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the increasing number of refugees and forcibly displaced persons worldwide. The Holy See was grateful to those countries which had kept their borders and their hearts open to refugees and called on all member States to assist in sharing the burden with them.

50. Burden sharing should be effected on the basis of wealth and level of development. As His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI had indicated, the active involvement of international partners was a grave and unconditional moral responsibility, founded on the unity of the human race. If the concept of citizenship was applied as an equalizing right, that could serve as a new definition of social cohesion that would help to prevent conflict. The vicious circle of vengeful violence could be broken by forgiveness, dialogue and reconciliation.

51. The Holy See welcomed the expanded vision of education announced in the recent UNHCR education policy, especially the recognition that ending education for refugees at the primary level would stunt the development of the children in the agency's care. The Holy See called on host countries to remove all barriers to further education for refugee children and encouraged the High Commissioner to continue to advocate for those displaced by armed conflict. It sincerely hoped that the pleas for peace from religious leaders in Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region would be heard and heeded by all parties involved.

52. **Mr. Hoscheit** (Luxembourg) thanked the High Commissioner for attending a recent forum on cooperation held in Luxembourg and paid tribute to UNHCR staff who had lost their lives in recent conflicts. He said that it was critical for all Governments to take full responsibility for the safety of humanitarian staff and persons of concern and that UNHCR must be given the means to respond swiftly and appropriately to the various crises. In that connection, Luxembourg had signed a multi-year framework agreement with UNHCR to guarantee the agency better budgetary predictability, increased flexibility and stable financial support.

53. The humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic was a matter for great concern, and he appealed for measures to be taken to allow the full deployment of

humanitarian assistance there. The situation in Mali was particularly alarming. Luxembourg had thus far contributed €9.2 million for that region, including €1.5 million for the victims of the conflict in Mali. Long-term solutions were needed to address the impact of continued violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and South Sudan. Solutions should include repatriation of displaced persons as soon as conditions permitted.

54. He thanked UNHCR for the interest it had shown in the “emergency.lu” project and welcomed the signing of an agreement that opened the way for the installation of equipment in the most remote areas that would allow for improved communication and coordination in the field. Four terminals were operational in Mali and South Sudan and a fifth would soon be installed in Nepal, while additional terminals were on standby in Dubai. He welcomed the request by UNHCR to establish “emergency.lu” facilities in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

55. **Mr. Piperkov** (Bulgaria) said that, since the previous session of the Executive Committee, Bulgaria had implemented a number of measures to provide protection for asylum seekers, refugees and persons requiring humanitarian assistance. The Law on Asylum and Refugees was strictly observed and the requirements of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, including the principle of non-refoulement, were fulfilled. Asylum seekers recognized as refugees or granted humanitarian status had the same rights as Bulgarian citizens. The State Agency for Refugees had improved the quality of the status determination procedure.

56. In the framework of an international project initiated by the General Directors’ Immigration Services Conference, the State Agency had reviewed the cases of more than a hundred asylum seekers. The Pastrogor transit centre for newly arrived asylum seekers, with a capacity to accommodate 300 persons, had opened in Bulgaria in May 2012. It offered unrestricted access to accommodation and freedom of movement pending a review by the competent national authorities as to whether, under the Dublin II Regulation, Bulgaria was responsible for examining the asylum claim.

57. In the light of the recent increase in the number of Syrian asylum seekers, a national temporary protection plan had been approved by the Council of Ministers to ensure that the influx was managed as efficiently as possible. Bulgaria had joined the EUREMA project on the intra-European Union reallocation of beneficiaries of protection from Malta and, on 13 June 2012, the Council of Ministers had approved a pilot project to resettle 20 refugees from third countries for one year. Bulgaria was boosting the capacity of the registration and reception centres in Sofia and Banya, where refugees received legal and social integration assistance.

58. **Mr. Baati** (Tunisia) said that Tunisia had spontaneously assumed responsibility for refugees fleeing Libya in 2011 and continued to act as a host country. Although most of the refugees had now been repatriated, some 2,000 people had been unable to leave Tunisia owing to the precarious situation in their country of origin. He appealed to the countries which had been willing to resettle those refugees to speed up the process in order to end the refugees’ suffering.

59. Since the revolution of 2011 and the experience that Tunisia had had in dealing with the Libyan refugees, the Government had decided to place greater emphasis on strengthening protection for refugees and displaced persons. For example, it was making progress on aligning domestic legislation with international instruments on asylum. He wished to thank UNHCR for its contribution to the refugee conference held by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Ashgabat in May 2012 and the 2012 Conference of the Group of African States on the humanitarian situation in the Sahel.

60. **Mr. Condé** (Guinea) said that two decades earlier, Guinea had welcomed some 800,000 refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire and offered them protection.

While those in the subregion were pleased to see the return of peace and political stability, they noted that conflicts, crises and natural disasters were proliferating around the world, notably in neighbouring Mali. In that light and following the application of the cessation clause on 30 June 2012 in respect of Liberian refugees, the Government of Guinea and the UNHCR country office had taken steps to achieve durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation and local integration. Thus far, 1,481 people had been repatriated to Liberia, while 7,150 had chosen to remain in Guinea. Concerning the 6,500 Ivorian refugees living in the country, a repatriation agreement had been signed between the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea and UNHCR. Pending repatriation, refugees were entitled to Government assistance and protection. The Government had furthermore established a national commission to facilitate sustainable local integration.

61. His Government needed international support to help foster the progressive autonomy of refugees in Guinea. In that connection, on behalf of the President of the Republic, he wished to invite the High Commissioner to visit Guinea at his earliest convenience.

62. **Mr. Ruwebana** (Rwanda) said that, following the 1994 genocide, the repatriation of Rwandan refugees had become a top Government priority. More than 3.5 million refugees had been repatriated and successfully reintegrated into their communities. On 31 December 2011, UNHCR had officially declared the application of the cessation clause in respect of Rwandan refugees who had fled prior to 31 December 1998. The Government wished to thank member States for their support during the negotiation of the cessation clause. Since then, it had intensified its efforts to promote voluntary repatriation. Indeed, 8,650 refugees had returned to Rwanda since January 2012. Those refugees who chose to remain were encouraged to apply for identification and travel documents. If successful, they would effectively change their status from refugees to members of the Rwandan diaspora. The country had recently received some 20,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 14,000 of whom had been settled in a newly established refugee camp.

63. **Mr. Mallinga** (Uganda) thanked UNHCR for marshalling support for the Government of Uganda to meet the protection requirements of refugees newly arrived from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He commended the current UNHCR representative in Uganda, Mr. Mohammed Adar, for greatly improving relations between UNHCR, the Government and implementing and operational partners. He said that Uganda was now host to 197,770 refugees and asylum seekers, an increase of more than 40,000 since December 2011, and more people continued to arrive. The response of the humanitarian community had been strong, but there was a need to develop infrastructure and rehabilitate refugee settlements.

64. Protracted refugee situations required creativity and flexibility on the part of Governments and UNHCR. The Government invited UNHCR to set up a technical team to provide advice and establish mechanisms for dealing with long-term refugees. The presence of a growing number of persons of concern had adversely affected various national services, putting a strain, for example, on the resources of the civilian police; in one settlement there were only 30 police officers for 60,000 refugees. The Government was developing a security enhancement package to address that problem.

65. He reiterated his Government's call for post-repatriation rehabilitation programmes for refugee hosting countries and for UNHCR to lead the process of mobilizing resources for that purpose. His Government was pleased with the continuous support that it received from UNHCR and other agencies and would welcome technical support on naturalization procedures in respect of refugee populations.

66. **Mr. Guterres** (High Commissioner) commended the Holy See on the role played by national churches in combating xenophobia and racism. He expressed great satisfaction

with the signing of the multi-year framework agreement with the Government of Luxembourg and thanked it for licensing the use of the “emergency.lu” terminals.

67. The Executive Committee would look forward to an update on the pilot resettlement programme in Bulgaria. He commended Tunisia on its generosity towards Libyan refugees and asked for it to be patient while remaining camps were closed. He said that Guinea had always shown great generosity as a host country and applauded its use of local integration as a durable solution. Acknowledging that UNHCR had not done enough to support Guinea, he said that he would gladly accept the invitation to visit. UNHCR was, furthermore, deeply committed to working with the Government of Rwanda on the application of the cessation clause. The fact that Uganda often seemed “fated” to serve as a country of asylum should be recognized by the international community. Again, UNHCR was not doing enough and would willingly cooperate with Uganda on creative and flexible solutions.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.