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Summary record of the 711th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 1 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Dalil.....(Afghanistan)

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General debate (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

1. **Ms. Georgieva** (Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank) said that action to combat extreme poverty had enabled more than 1 billion people to escape from that condition over the past 25 years, despite the fact that the world population had increased by 2 billion over the same period. Nevertheless, nearly 800 million people had been living in poverty in 2015 and it was conceivable that the scourge would spread to an increasing number of fragile and conflict-affected countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, and cause massive population displacements. Syria, for example, had been a middle-income country seven years previously, but now 65 per cent of its population lived in extreme poverty. Alongside internal conflicts, climate change would be another major driver of future displacements. Successfully overcoming extreme poverty would primarily depend on the measures taken by international actors to address the root cause of migration flows, namely the vulnerability of countries to conflict and natural disasters, and to increase resilience at the national level.

2. Ms. Ogata, the former High Commissioner for Refugees, had expressed her deep regret at the level of disconnect between the actions of humanitarian workers and development partners. However, as part of the Grand Bargain adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in 2016, States had now pledged to coordinate their efforts to combat humanitarian crises in a more effective manner. Since that Summit, the level of donor contributions to the poorest countries had doubled from US\$ 7 billion to US\$ 14 billion, allowing the World Bank to invest in particularly fragile developing countries. The Bank had also created a new window for refugee assistance through its International Development Association (IDA), in order to provide more direct support to refugees and host communities. It was also reaching out to bilateral donors with a view to expanding its presence on the ground. Thanks to the new Concessional Financing Facility, the cost of financing for middle-income countries hosting large numbers of refugees had been significantly reduced, almost to the level offered to the poorest countries, in order to help them to support the costs associated with receiving those populations. The World Bank was closely monitoring the situation of small island States that, in the future, would inevitably be hit by natural disasters on an increasingly regular basis.

3. The work of the World Bank had assumed a very different dimension since it had started sending teams to the field to join forces with humanitarian partners such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). That new dimension had significantly strengthened the Bank's capacity to develop and implement programmes for refugees, including social protection initiatives. The World Bank would spare no effort to help refugees return home, including Afghan citizens returning from Pakistan. By 2019, it should have set up a system based on a joint data centre in Copenhagen for the purpose of accurately identifying the countries of origin, destination and transit of migrants and recording reception conditions in host countries, in order to guide the joint action taken with partners including UNHCR. More use should also be made of digital technologies as a means to foster interaction, better coordinate aid and investment, and help refugees and host communities enter the 21st century economy, which was the only way for them to gain access to the labour market and credit and, thus, integrate in society. Yet, at present, only 28 per cent of Africa was connected. Ultimately, only prevention would stem the flow of migration. It would therefore be up to all partners and States to combat all risk factors by demonstrating full commitment to the cause at every level.

4. **Mr. Grandi** (High Commissioner for Refugees), welcoming the many positive developments outlined by Ms. Georgieva, said that they had marked a real turning point in how migration issues were financed and addressed. Although the new mechanisms could never replace the work carried out by humanitarian actors, they would offer new opportunities for refugees, such as the assistance provided by the International Development Association and the Concessional Financing Facility, which had already demonstrated that it could improve the lives of millions of people. Encouraging member States to take part in all the new initiatives, he welcomed the creation of the joint data centre in Copenhagen and the World Bank's commitment to improving access to digital

technologies in Africa. Lastly, he welcomed the prospect of closer cooperation between development agencies and humanitarian actors.

5. **Mr. Mohamed** (Djibouti) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by Uganda on behalf of the African Group. Djibouti had always strived for peace in East Africa and its use of diplomacy had contributed to the restoration of peace in the Horn of Africa, a situation that should in turn ease tensions and conflicts, reduce population movements and encourage the voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin. Djibouti welcomed the creation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which would improve how the issue of asylum was managed, and was committed both to facilitating the inclusion of refugees in the country's socioeconomic system and to taking greater account of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in its development plans in order to guarantee them access to basic social services. To that end, the refugee protection law regulated their access to education, health care and employment. Refugees could open a bank account and had access to credit, while their refugee card served as a residence and work permit. The relevant bodies were also working with United Nations agencies and bilateral partners to set up refugee integration projects involving vocational training that targeted specific labour market needs.

6. **Mr. Onek** (Uganda) said that Uganda hosted more refugees than any other country in Africa (1.5 million people, or 3.5 per cent of its total population) and that the country maintained an open-door policy in keeping with traditional African hospitality, despite the many obstacles to development with which it was confronted. It had an "out-of-camp" policy concerning refugees and guaranteed them a whole range of rights, including the rights to employment, education and health care, thereby enabling them to enjoy full economic autonomy. Given that Uganda had to cover 82 per cent of the costs related to hosting refugees, it was a policy that did not come cheap. The Ugandan authorities therefore urged the international community to renew its efforts to support the settlement policy and to increase investments to promote peaceful coexistence. As a pioneer in the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, Uganda had launched the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in September 2018 and now intended to adopt other response plans in the areas of health, water and the environment, livelihood and resilience. Those efforts would not be sustainable unless the burden of receiving refugees was shared among all the countries of the international community, rather than being borne by States bordering countries confronted by a humanitarian crisis. Uganda therefore called on the international community to provide it with more resources, financial or otherwise, so that it could continue to fulfil its obligations with respect to the reception of refugees.

7. **Mr. Win Myat Aye** (Observer for Myanmar) said that many Muslim citizens of Myanmar had taken refuge in Bangladesh following the attacks carried out by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in August 2017. The Government intended to address the current crisis and its root causes by implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (81 of the 88 recommendations had already been implemented). Myanmar had signed an agreement with Bangladesh for the repatriation of all the refugees, an undertaking that would require a high level of collaboration and coordination. The country was committed to addressing the specific problems that were holding up the repatriation process and to creating an environment conducive to voluntary repatriation. To that end, it had also signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNHCR, under which joint technical teams had already conducted evaluations in villages in northern Rakhine State. The aforementioned Advisory Commission had been established in 2016, prior to the onset of the crisis, but its work had been hindered by the attacks of August 2017. All persons found to have committed human rights violations by an independent inquiry commission would be held accountable for their actions.

8. **Ms. Hagen** (Norway) said that the number of forced displacements remained alarmingly high, that some protracted situations gave particular cause for concern and that the international community was unable to provide adequate protection and assistance to refugees. In that regard, Norway considered the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework to be an important step forward. The country had participated in the

consultations on the global compact on refugees, which would lead towards a fairer system of shared responsibility between States. It hoped that the compact would be universally endorsed. The issue of refugees was at the heart of the country's new humanitarian strategy, which set out three priorities: education, for which aid had doubled in the period from 2013 to 2017 and to which Norway continued to devote at least 8 per cent of its humanitarian budget; financing, an area in which the growing needs could only be addressed through innovation and management reforms; and protection, which was the country's main priority. The credibility of the refugee protection system depended on the creation of a fair system for the return of asylum seekers who did not need international protection. There were twice as many internally displaced persons (IDPs) as refugees, but concrete measures of assistance for the former fell seriously short of their needs. In order to leave no one behind, the United Nations system and States Members needed to make a concerted effort to help displaced persons and their hosts. Norway supported the proposal encouraging the Secretary-General of the United Nations to appoint a high-level panel on that issue. To promote quick and effective assistance, and in accordance with the Grand Bargain, Norway would continue to provide contributions to UNHCR that were both unearmarked (US\$ 41 million of the US\$ 99 million provided in 2017) or softly earmarked, in addition to providing US\$ 14 million to support UNHCR work in Syria and neighbouring countries.

9. **Mr. Kampyongo** (Zambia) said that his country associated itself with the statement made by Uganda on behalf of the African Group. The contribution of African countries should be measured in part by quantifying the support in kind that they provided to refugees, despite their limited resources. There were more than 42,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in Zambia, 22,000 of whom had arrived since August 2017, in addition to the 20,000 former Angolan and Rwandan refugees who had been granted a specific legal status and whose integration into Zambian society was still ongoing. In total, Zambia was presently home to more than 74,000 refugees, asylum seekers and former refugees. In the light of the situation in the DRC, that number might continue to rise. A third camp, which currently hosted 13,874 refugees, had been established near the Congolese border thanks to a donation of US\$ 6.2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). However, additional funding was needed to improve reception conditions at the border and in camps. In May 2018, the Government had launched a response plan for Congolese refugees under which US\$ 74 million would be needed if Zambia were to receive at least 76,000 new Congolese refugees by the end of 2018. The level of underfunding currently stood at 17 per cent of needs.

10. Zambia had become the seventh African country to roll out the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, and the first in southern Africa. Lessons learned from the local integration programme had enabled it to respond in an innovative way to the new influx of Congolese refugees. Thus, local authorities and a range of other partners had been brought together to ensure that the action taken would benefit both refugees and local communities. Under the programme, more than 3,000 former Angolan and Rwandan refugees had been granted permanent or temporary residence permits. Financial assistance would be required to ensure that the remaining 11,000 refugees from those countries would also receive permits. Finally, Zambia intended to accede to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and would initiate the accession process before the end of 2018.

11. **Mr. Mballow** (Gambia) said that his country, despite its limited resources, still hosted 8,000 refugees. The majority were Senegalese nationals who had arrived between 2006 and 2012, and the Government had issued them with identity documents to enable them to access various services. He regretted that UNHCR had made plans to close its office in the Gambia by mid-2019. He hoped that the High Commissioner would go back on that decision until such time as the country could amend its Constitution and nationality laws to provide for either the issuance of residence permits or the naturalization of refugees. The Government was currently reforming the country's governance structures, a process that presented considerable challenges. Support from UNHCR was necessary to ensure that the increasing number of asylum applications were handled in a consistent and transparent manner, to facilitate the work of the Constitutional Review Commission on refugee laws, and to ensure that the review of the 2008 Refugee Act would bring it into line with international standards. In partnership with UNHCR, the Gambia Commission for Refugees organized capacity-building activities, registered refugees and asylum seekers, and

conducted surveys on mixed migration flows. It had also signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Agency for Legal Aid, with a view to providing refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR with access to justice free of charge. The Gambia had ratified the two United Nations conventions on statelessness and had taken part in drafting the African Union protocol on the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness.

12. **Mr. Konate** (Observer for Mali) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by Uganda on behalf of the African Group. Mali had welcomed refugees from neighbouring States, while there were also 200,000 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries and 596,000 Malian IDPs. Mali joined other countries in deploring the inadequacy of international assistance to IDPs. With the support of UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IMO), UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and other technical and financial partners, 88 per cent of IDPs had been able to return to their homes. On 24 February 2018, representatives from Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and UNHCR had attended a high-level meeting to discuss the voluntary repatriation of refugees. Mali called on the international community to increase humanitarian and development assistance to help the country to overcome its current crisis. The fact that refugees and IDPs were returning to their homes was an important sign that the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was taking effect.

13. **Mr. Sirleaf** (Liberia) said that his Government continued to allow persons fleeing persecution to seek asylum in Liberia. In 2018, 5 out of a total of 33 asylum requests had resulted in refugee status being granted. Refugee services, which had traditionally been administered by UNHCR, had been integrated into the national framework. As a result, Liberians and refugees now had access to the same services, including in the areas of education, health and social protection. Discussions were under way to develop sustainable local integration solutions for the 800 out of 9,454 refugees who had chosen to stay in the country, and 122 hectares of land had been made available in one refugee-hosting area to support the integration programme. Furthermore, Liberia had naturalized 375 former refugees from Sierra Leone and 1,101 others were expected to obtain civil status documentation in the near future. The new Government of Liberia remained committed to improving national legislation and was currently revising the 1973 Alien and Nationality Laws to amend provisions contained therein that could lead to statelessness. It was also committed to domesticating the two conventions on statelessness and the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

14. **Mr. Bachir** (Chad) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the African Group. As at 31 August 2018, 449,748 refugees and asylum seekers and more than 200,000 IDPs had been registered on the country's database. Despite its difficult economic situation, Chad was striving to fulfil its commitments and to improve its protection and empowerment frameworks for refugees. It had established 108 official schools in refugee camps, provided 219,604 refugees with arable land and issued almost 16,000 birth certificates. There were also plans to adopt, by the end of 2018, an asylum law addressing the need to protect refugees. Most Sudanese refugees had now been in an asylum situation for an extended period of time, which had led Chad and the Sudan to join forces with UNHCR to develop strategies for their voluntary return. To date, 354 of them had returned home and many others were expected to follow suit. Chad was determined to offer stronger protection for refugees and to seek comprehensive, sustainable solutions. With that in mind, and in response to the commitments made at the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis in 2016, the country had acceded to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework on 3 May 2018. On 19 September 2018, in N'Djamena, it had also adopted a response plan based both on the objectives of the framework and on other strategic pillars, such as asylum and protection, education, health and resilience.

15. **Mr. Au** (Lesotho) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the African Group. Despite its fragile economy and rising unemployment, Lesotho had always opened its doors to refugees and would continue to do so. It was faced with the arrival of large families from the Great Lakes region whose members included children and pregnant women. International protection strategies in line with the

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework were needed for the benefit of those vulnerable individuals. In Lesotho, refugees continued to fill the void left by the country's workers who had moved abroad in search of better job opportunities. As a result, a small but growing number of refugees worked in remote areas as doctors, teachers or entrepreneurs, a testament to the capacity of migration to drive development. Lesotho had established productive partnerships with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs): for example, uniforms were provided free of charge to refugee children. The country continued to naturalize refugees who wished to be fully integrated into society and obtain Lesotho citizenship. Furthermore, the new Immigration and Citizen Bill 2018 contained special provisions on refugees and stateless persons.

16. **Mr. Ngarambé** (Rwanda) said that his country associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the African Group. Rwanda was currently hosting more than 150,000 refugees who had mainly fled from eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi; most of them lived in six camps, the largest of which accommodated over 57,000 Burundian refugees. On 14 February 2018, Rwanda had adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. The Government ensured the security and protection of all refugees and integrated them into existing health and education programmes. Currently, 83.4 per cent of refugee pupils and students were enrolled in the national education system. Nearly 4,000 refugee identity cards had been issued, and all refugees aged 16 or over should receive one as verification efforts progressed. Under the refugee law of 2014, refugees had a range of rights, including the right to work and freedom of movement. In addition, the authorities promoted the return and reintegration of Rwandan refugees and facilitated the local integration of those who opted to remain abroad. Since January 2018, more than 2,400 Rwandans had returned to the country and were enrolled in schemes that provided them with a national identity card and basic health insurance.

17. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by the various States and their support of the activities of UNHCR. He particularly wished to thank the States that had chosen to join the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, as well as Norway for having pledged a \$14 million contribution to UNHCR activities in Syria. Uganda remained a model in the area of refugee inclusion and integration. In that connection, he stressed that the generosity of some countries of asylum should not be taken for granted; on the contrary, they should be provided with assistance in the form of appropriate resources. Although UNHCR needed to set up multi-country offices and rationalize its activities to achieve economies of scale in some regions of the world, that did not mean that it would reduce its aid to countries which needed it. He noted with interest the commitment of the Federal Government of Myanmar to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by the late Kofi Annan. He reaffirmed that the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR were determined to collaborate with the authorities of Myanmar to put into effect the recently signed memorandum of understanding.

18. **Mr. Abera Admasu** (Ethiopia) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the African Group. In keeping with the commitments made in New York in September 2016, Ethiopia had taken important steps to better protect refugees, including those who lived outside of camps, by improving their self-reliance, particularly with regard to education and essential social services. Unfortunately, the national refugee response plan continued to suffer from serious underfunding: only 25 per cent of the \$321 million budget for 2018 had been funded thus far. Regarding education, the enrolment rate among refugee children was 72 per cent at the primary level and 12 per cent at the secondary level. In addition, the construction of irrigation systems on the 10,000 hectares of land granted by the Government enabled the production of crops and fruit for refugees and host communities. Furthermore, civil registration efforts had been launched in the 27 refugee camps in order to reduce cases of statelessness. In parallel, the presence of nearly 1.8 million internally displaced persons was an additional burden on Ethiopia, which strived to link humanitarian assistance with long-term development and peacebuilding, with a view to strengthening the population's resilience.

19. **Mr. Hoc Yai** (Observer for South Sudan) said that, under the aegis of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, his country had signed the Revitalized

Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in 2018, which would help bring about lasting peace and the conditions for the voluntary return of all South Sudanese. It had also signed the instruments of accession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. Since its independence in 2011, South Sudan had had an open-door policy, as demonstrated by the enactment of the Refugees Act in 2012 and its regulations in 2017. Despite internal challenges, South Sudan was currently hosting nearly 300,000 refugees and over 2,000 asylum seekers and was taking steps to empower them by issuing them with identification cards, ensuring access to education, providing them with safe accommodation, donating agricultural land and granting them the right to seek employment. In order to continue in that direction and implement the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, assistance from UNHCR and the international community was indispensable. Regarding the internally displaced, the Kampala Convention had been tabled in parliament for final approval and a draft national legal framework for the protection of internally displaced persons had been developed. Nevertheless, hosting refugees came with challenges. The compounds of the United Nations and NGO partners in Maban County, where 144,000 refugees lived, had been attacked and plundered. In conclusion, he was delighted that the Nansen Refugee Award had been awarded to a South Sudanese surgeon, Dr. Atar, and wished to thank Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for receiving South Sudanese citizens since 2013.

20. **Mr. Osman** (Sudan) said that his country hosted over 2 million refugees from neighbouring countries, particularly South Sudan; however, the international community's assistance covered only 35 per cent of related expenditures, entailing a considerable drain on the country's limited resources. Sudan experienced mixed migration flows and illegal migration, which had led to the resurgence of organized crime, transnational crime and trafficking in persons, placing a heavy financial burden on the State. Therefore, it was unable to provide the requisite health care, education and accommodation for the refugees. Some 60 per cent of refugees lived in towns and villages, rather than in camps, and consequently did not receive any assistance from UNHCR. In 2016, the Government had introduced a refugee registration system that enabled all of them to obtain an identity card and travel documents. Pursuant to the agreement between Sudan, Chad and UNHCR, which focused on voluntary returns, 1,493 Sudanese refugees had been able to return to the country and nearly 90,000 refugees living in Sudan had returned home. Sudan remained open to assisting its neighbour with facilitating the return of all South Sudanese refugees to that country. He reaffirmed Sudan's solidarity with the African Union and endorsed the statement made on behalf of the African Group. In order to help refugees, he suggested that: refugees from South Sudan should be provided with additional services; the capacity of Sudan to register refugees should be increased; technical assistance and capacity-building for host communities should be stepped up; funding gaps should be filled; the return of Sudanese refugees living in Chad should be facilitated; the root causes of exile should be addressed; the voluntary refugee return programme should be implemented; assistance should be provided to refugees living outside of camps; and funds should be allocated to anti-human trafficking programmes.

21. **Mr. Hovakimian** (Armenia) said that, first and foremost, he wished to pay tribute to the memory of Charles Aznavour, who had just passed away. Armenia supported the global compact on refugees and believed that the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework could serve as guidance for collective commitments in favour of refugees. In the light of the country's socioeconomic situation and the lack of foreign help, welcoming refugees, especially the 22,000 Syrians, represented a serious challenge, in particular when it came to managing new arrivals, finding long-term accommodation and guaranteeing access to employment. Support from UNHCR and other international partners was vital in that regard. Concerned about the situation in Syria and the safety of Armenians living there, the Government of Armenia continued to support the humanitarian mission aimed at addressing the urgent needs of the Armenian community in Syria. It had granted 2,500 Syrians the right to pursue university studies and had provided employment to 80 Syrian doctors and more than 2,000 migrants. He recalled that 2018 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the pogrom in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, when 480,000 Armenian refugees had fled the atrocities. More recently, in 2016, Azerbaijani aggression had shown that the right to life of the

populations in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was not respected. Armenia thanked UNHCR for the assistance provided to the 2,000 Armenians who had been displaced as a result of the aggression and whose human rights and fundamental freedoms continued to be violated. Efforts should be made to facilitate humanitarian access to the region by UNHCR and the United Nations treaty bodies.

22. **Ms. Javakhadze** (Georgia) said that Georgia had received 542 asylum seekers in 2018, primarily from Iran, Turkey, Egypt and Iraq. There were 1,410 international protection holders, including 442 refugees and 968 humanitarian status holders, and their number was growing. Accordingly, the Government had enhanced the asylum system through the introduction of a new institutional framework and the adoption of a law on international protection in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. The law laid down general principles of international protection, strengthened procedural safeguards at all stages of the asylum process and defined the rights and freedoms of asylum seekers, refugees and other persons in need of international protection. Such persons benefited from the universal health-care programme and enjoyed the rights to education and to work; international protection holders also benefited from a monthly allowance during their stay in Georgia. The Government cooperated actively with UNHCR and other international organizations and had been involved in drafting the global compact on refugees, the provisions of which it wished to examine with the regional representation of UNHCR in the South Caucasus. She recalled that 20 per cent of Georgian territory was occupied and that internally displaced persons accounted for 7 per cent of the country's population. Until the conditions were safe enough for them to return home, the Government would provide durable housing solutions to facilitate their full integration in society. Thus, housing had been allocated to over 110,000 displaced persons. Pursuant to the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons that Georgia should continue its transition from status-based to needs-based assistance for displaced persons, the Government was continuing to reform the allowance system for those persons and to keep them informed of the changes.

23. **Mr. Grandi** (High Commissioner for Refugees) welcomed the efforts made by the various States and their support for the activities of UNHCR.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.