

**Executive Committee of the  
High Commissioner's Programme**

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**Standing Committee**

Eighty-third meeting  
8-10 March 2022

Held at the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG), Geneva  
**Summary record\*, Tuesday, 9 March 22, at 10 a.m. (hybrid)**

*Chairperson: Mr. Baddoura ..... Lebanon)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Regional activities and global programmes** (*continued*)

**a. Regional activities and global programmes** (*continued*)

**iv. Europe**

1. **Ms. Moreau** (Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe, UNHCR) drew attention to her written update on the operations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Europe. The conflict in Ukraine had become the most urgent focus for the region, and she paid tribute to her UNHCR colleagues and other humanitarian workers who remained in the country, as well as the governments and citizens that had offered refuge to those fleeing the crisis. Millions of people had been internally displaced or forced to leave the country, where large-scale destruction and the disruption of services had caused a humanitarian emergency. Unless the conflict ceased, the levels of forced displacement would continue to rise.

2. The international community should work together to ensure the protection and inclusion of displaced populations, including the third-country nationals who were also leaving Ukraine. The decision of the European Union to trigger the Temporary Protection Directive was welcome; that would allow refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons arriving from Ukraine to rapidly regularize their legal status, thereby alleviating pressure on asylum systems, and enable them to find work, access services and obtain social protection in European Union Member States. Similar announcements of temporary protection measures from the United States, Canada, Brazil and others were also commendable. However, additional humanitarian and development support was needed for the countries bordering Ukraine, especially non-members of the European Union; the Republic of Moldova required particular assistance given the pre-existing challenges it faced. The next stage would be to support integration, especially in host countries such as Poland where refugees might decide to join previously settled family members.

3. UNHCR was committed to a joint response under the Refugee Coordination Model, providing a single point of contact for governments to ensure that offers of assistance were directed where they were most needed. Such a response required significant funds. She therefore urged Member States to promptly fulfil their pledges to the flash appeal and regional refugee response plan, and make those contributions as flexible as possible to allow the most appropriate response. It was notable that donations from the private sector and individuals currently outstripped government contributions by a wide margin.

4. In practical terms, UNHCR was working as part of the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team to pre-position stocks of core relief items for distribution in conflict-affected areas. Other more flexible forms of assistance were also being provided to displaced persons, including cash and vouchers for food. Although UNHCR held a trusted position in the country, the active conflict made the situation dangerous for its staff and partners; it would therefore work within the United Nations security system and be guided by the expertise of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

5. At the regional level, UNHCR was working with the appropriate partners to tackle other challenges associated with the complex refugee crisis, namely those related to child protection, family separation, and human trafficking and exploitation. In neighbouring host countries, starting with the Republic of Moldova and Poland, the Office had introduced a transitional multipurpose cash programme to support refugees and eventually enable them to access the social protection entitlements of host countries; that programme could be supplemented by other agencies or expanded as necessary. Direct support would be provided to collective centres when that became necessary, with a particular focus on child protection. As the crisis evolved, UNHCR would continue to scale up its response alongside other United Nations agencies, with the engagement and support of Member States, observers and other partners.

6. **Ms. Knudsen** (European Union, Group statement) said that the candidate countries of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and

Ukraine aligned themselves with her statement. As Europe faced one of the fastest growing refugee crises in history, UNHCR support was needed now more than ever. She strongly condemned the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation – which had violated international law, including the Charter of the United Nations – and expressed unwavering support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union called for the immediate cessation of military aggression by the Russian Federation and the withdrawal of all forces and military equipment from Ukrainian territory. It also strongly condemned the involvement of Belarus in the unlawful aggression and called upon that country to refrain from such action and abide by its international obligations.

7. As the humanitarian catastrophe continued to unfold, the European Union would stand by the people of Ukraine and seek to provide safety and shelter for all those fleeing the war, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religion or skin colour. Accordingly, its Member States were keeping their borders open for refugees; providing protection to Ukrainians, third-country nationals and their family members; and facilitating repatriation for third-country nationals trying to return home. Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova had shown exemplary generosity to those seeking safety, while European countries further afield had also shown great support.

8. Specific measures introduced by the European Union included activation of the Temporary Protection Directive to provide those fleeing the war with residence permits and access to services in their host countries. Material assistance was also being provided through the Civil Protection Mechanism, while €500 million in new funding had been committed to the flash appeal and regional refugee response plan. In addition, for the past eight years, the European Union had been providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people living on both sides of the contact line in eastern Ukraine. She commended the efforts of UNHCR and its partners to scale up operations in Ukraine, recognizing the courage shown by staff in a dangerous situation. All humanitarian actors should continue working in a coordinated and complementary manner.

9. The European Union and its Member States urgently called on the Russian Federation and Russian-backed armed groups to fully comply with their obligations under international law to allow rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, notably by complying with the recent agreement on safe passage for humanitarian convoys and civilians leaving conflict areas. However, no amount of aid could compensate for the loss of lives and homes. The support shown for United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 sent a clear message: the Russian Federation must end its hostilities in Ukraine.

10. **Mr. Czech** (Poland) strongly condemned the military action by the Russian Federation, including the use of military force against non-military objects, infrastructure and civilians themselves, in particular children. Those responsible for the atrocities should be brought to justice, and he called on the Russian Federation to allow immediate unimpeded humanitarian access for civilians and humanitarian convoys. The conflict had caused 1.3 million people to flee to Poland, where citizens were showing great generosity in supporting those in need. The Government had introduced extraordinary measures to assist all new arrivals, regardless of nationality, origin, skin colour, gender or religion, including the provision of food, shelter, transportation and health care. Border infrastructure had also been adapted to facilitate the reception of refugees.

11. In parallel, his Government was increasing its multilateral donations to partners assisting internally displaced persons in Ukraine, contributing 750,000 Swiss francs to the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, \$120,000 to the United Nations Children's Fund and \$500,000 to the humanitarian flash appeal launched by OCHA. It would continue to cooperate with international humanitarian partners, including by hosting personnel, and called on the international community to support both Ukraine and the neighbouring countries affected by population flows in the region. UNHCR remained a strategic partner in the delivery of global humanitarian assistance, as it played a unique role in the multilateral aid system.

12. He asked what contingency measures UNHCR envisaged in the event that the conflict expanded to western Ukraine, and what systemic solutions could be introduced to help neighbouring countries manage the inflow of refugees over the short, medium and long term.

13. **Ms. Crocker** (United States of America) condemned the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, enabled by Belarus, including the ongoing attacks on civilians and infrastructure, including hospitals and schools. Expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people, she called on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its unlawful use of force in the country, which was causing catastrophic human suffering and loss of life, and creating the fastest growing refugee crisis of modern times.

14. Commending UNHCR's efforts in Ukraine and throughout Europe to provide life-saving assistance and strengthen refugee and asylum seeker integration, she praised the leadership shown by the Organization in responding to the humanitarian crisis, and thanked the humanitarian personnel who had remained in the country despite grave danger. In that respect, the United States called on the Russian Federation to abide by its international obligations to protect civilians, including aid workers, and allow them safe passage and access to assistance.

15. It was encouraging to see strong coordination between UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, and the unified response from Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector. Her Government was part of those efforts, contributing \$54 million in additional humanitarian assistance for UNHCR to continue its leadership of the protection and shelter/non-food item clusters and provide cash, protection and shelter to internally displaced persons. The United States would continue to work with its allies and partners, and called on the international community to respond to the needs of those seeking protection at the borders, regardless of race or national origin, in line with international law and the principle of non-refoulement.

16. **Ms. Méndez Escobar** (Mexico) expressed grave concern regarding the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine, and the high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons arising from the conflict. It was also alarming to receive reports of discrimination and violence against some third-country nationals fleeing the conflict; all those leaving Ukraine should be granted safe passage in accordance with international law. She commended the solidarity shown by the countries receiving refugees and called on them to keep borders open to allow further movements as required, especially for vulnerable people. Her Government welcomed UNHCR's commitment to remaining in the country, despite the complex security context, and called for unimpeded access to conflict areas for humanitarian agents, and the safe passage of civilian populations. Lastly, it should be recalled that other urgent crises around the world also required the attention of the international community.

17. **Mr. Manley** (United Kingdom) said that the illegal and premeditated assault by the Russian Federation on a sovereign democratic State had outraged the international community, causing civilian deaths, large-scale displacement of populations and huge suffering. Observing that such actions violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations, he called on the Russian Federation to end its criminal actions immediately and guarantee safe humanitarian access as needed.

18. Expressing support for the High Commissioner's expression of concern regarding the devastating humanitarian consequences of the military action, he called on the international community to demand full humanitarian access and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights at all times. The Russian regime would be held accountable for its crimes, including through the International Criminal Court. When the rights and safety of millions of people were in such immediate danger, access for humanitarian support and the protection of civilians was paramount; that could only be provided if there were ceasefires. His Government therefore called on the Russian Federation to respect the stated ceasefires, which should be concrete, actionable and as precise as possible.

19. His Government had announced a new funding package for Ukraine, bringing its total support to almost 400 million pounds sterling (£), including £220 million in humanitarian aid to save lives, protect vulnerable people inside and outside Ukraine, and help neighbouring countries support refugees. Another £100 million of overseas development assistance had been allocated to bolster the Ukrainian economy and reduce its reliance on Russian gas imports, as well as £75 million in fiscal support to the Ukrainian Government. The United Kingdom Disasters Emergency Committee had

also raised more than £100 million, demonstrating the strength of support from the British people. His Government fully supported UNHCR, which had acted swiftly and demonstrated leadership in supporting a coordinated regional response, and would continue to work tirelessly with its allies as part of a coordinated international response.

20. **Mr. Lauber** (Switzerland) welcomed UNHCR's efforts in Europe, particularly in response to the crisis in Ukraine, and recognized the numerous challenges such as the loss of migrants at sea and the exploitation of refugees. His Government strongly condemned the military attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation and called on the President of the Russian Federation to immediately cease the military invasion and return to dialogue and diplomacy. He urged all parties to the armed conflict to respect international humanitarian law and facilitate fast, unimpeded humanitarian access for all people requiring protection, including third-country nationals. His Government supported any intervention that would facilitate the transportation of humanitarian aid and enable civilians to travel freely and safely to safe places. If established, humanitarian corridors should be well-organized, secured and properly implemented, and ceasefires must also be applied in that connection. He expressed appreciation for UNHCR's dedicated work in Ukraine and neighbouring countries and praised its leadership on the matter within the United Nations system in Geneva.

21. He welcomed the generosity demonstrated by the governments and people of the countries bordering Ukraine to those fleeing the conflict, and reiterated the importance of welcoming new arrivals regardless of their origin. Commending the decision made by the European Union and its Member States to grant temporary protection to refugees fleeing Ukraine, he said that his Government was considering a similar initiative to allow the rapid issuance of residence permits and was already providing support to countries neighbouring Ukraine. His Government was also supporting affected populations by providing financial assistance to support emergency interventions in Poland and deploying experts on the ground; providing financial support to humanitarian organizations including UNHCR to support regional refugee interventions. However, he emphasized that the conflict would only be resolved through the immediate cessation of all military activities in Ukraine.

22. **Ms. Kauppi** (Finland) strongly condemned the attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which was a flagrant violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the international order. The aggressor had caused immense human suffering and would be held accountable. The war had caused the destruction of basic infrastructure and civilian property, disrupted health-care services, generated food insecurity and carried the potential for wider implications. She commended UNHCR for providing a swift and robust response to the forced displacement crisis alongside other humanitarian agencies. Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova had demonstrated true solidarity with persons forced to leave Ukraine, and her country had also welcomed those fleeing the war. The recent application of the European Union Temporary Protection Directive would ensure that refugees could access protection more quickly than under the normal asylum procedure. Safety and shelter must be provided to all persons fleeing Ukraine without discrimination.

23. Her Government had already provided €14 million of additional financial support to Ukraine, including €8.2 million of humanitarian assistance channelled through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNHCR, and was sending other resources through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Special attention should be paid to those in particularly vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, to ensure that their needs and ability to protect themselves were taken into account. However, it would also be important not to forget the humanitarian crises occurring in other parts of the world as humanitarian needs had reached unprecedented levels even prior to the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

24. **Mr. Arslan** (Turkey) said that Europe was facing its worst security crisis since the cold war. The ongoing aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine was unacceptable and violated several agreements, international law and the Charter of the United Nations. His Government stood firmly against attempts to modify borders with the use of force. He applauded the adoption of General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 on aggression against Ukraine and Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/49/1 on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from

the Russian aggression. His Government would continue to support the political unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

25. The aggression was risking countless lives and causing immense suffering. Millions of people, mostly women and children, had been displaced from Ukraine and become refugees in a short period of time. He commended UNHCR for its courageous work and for scaling up its operation in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. His Government was helping people fleeing the conflict to enter Turkey and had been providing Ukraine and neighbouring countries with humanitarian aid. Turkish humanitarian organizations had also been working with Ukrainian counterparts to help affected populations and provide material support. He called on the United Nations to establish a central conflict coordination mechanism to protect and support the activities of all humanitarian actors in Ukraine and said that his Government was ready to apply its humanitarian experience to support such efforts. However, the most effective intervention would be securing peace, and he therefore called for dialogue and diplomacy. As a neighbour of both the Russian Federation and Ukraine, his Government was ready to facilitate efforts to find a peaceful route out of the situation.

26. Because of its location, Turkey had received several waves of asylum seekers and refugees with different backgrounds and was currently the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. All refugees and asylum seekers were human beings in need of protection and should not be seen as an existential threat. They should also be treated equally irrespective of their nationality, route of entry, ethnicity, religious beliefs or race. Pushback practices at Turkey's western borders remained a major concern for his Government: the discriminatory treatment of refugees in other countries had often led to a situation in which refugees arriving into Europe by sea were being returned to Turkey, and several had died as a result of those actions. The denial of access to asylum, the externalization of refugees and other legislative developments in the European region was a dangerous trend that contradicted the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the principles of burden- and responsibility-sharing. He therefore called on all European countries to address the matter on an equal footing.

27. **Mr. Bonnafont** (France) strongly condemned the military aggression displayed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the involvement of Belarus in that regard, which constituted a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, international peace and security, numerous humanitarian rights and the Geneva Conventions. The Government of the Russian Federation must be held accountable for those violations, including before the International Criminal Court. He called on the Government of the Russian Federation to immediately cease all hostilities, withdraw its troops entirely from Ukraine and respect human rights and international humanitarian law.

28. He commended the heroism and humanity of the Ukrainian Government and people, and called for civilians to be protected as a priority. He applauded the solidarity displayed by Ukraine's neighbouring countries in their efforts to welcome displaced persons without distinction or discrimination. His Government would stand by the Government and people of Ukraine and offer the protection needed. The European Union had taken the unprecedented decision to offer immediate protection to Ukrainians and citizens of other countries residing in Ukraine in a demonstration of its solidarity. The Government of France was also responding to the crisis by providing humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian people and had disbursed €100 million to support refugees and the humanitarian response in Ukraine. He commended the efforts of UNHCR and the humanitarian community for their response in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, and praised the courage and dedication of first responders working in dangerous conditions to serve the most vulnerable populations. He called on the Government of the Russian Federation to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all populations in need.

29. **Mr. Bekkers** (Netherlands) said that, although UNHCR discussions tended not to be politicized, delegations should not avoid discussing the root causes of major humanitarian crises. He therefore strongly condemned the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations that was harming Ukraine, its people and Europe. He urgently called on the Government of the Russian Federation to abide by the humanitarian imperative and respect international humanitarian

law and its principles, including by safeguarding humanitarian space and enabling safe corridors for civilian evacuations. Furthermore, refugees must be free to choose where to go, and UNHCR should provide all necessary support with a focus on protection, reception, shelter, materials, cash assistance and mental health and psychosocial support. His Government had recently pledged €20 million to the United Nations Ukraine Humanitarian Fund, and people in his country had donated €210 million through a private initiative to support people in need as a result of the war in Ukraine. He commended the governments of countries neighbouring Ukraine for their quick response in keeping their borders open and sheltering those in need, and underscored his Government's full commitment to the non-discriminatory provision of protection and shelter to all refugees regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion or skin colour.

30. **Ms. Norton** (Canada) condemned the unprovoked and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine by the Government of the Russian Federation and expressed concern at its devastating humanitarian impact on civilians and civilian infrastructure, the increasing number of displaced persons and the exacerbation of existing needs. The international community was united in its humanitarian response and its insistence that obligations under international humanitarian law must be respected at all times to minimize the humanitarian consequences currently being observed and to protect the unimpeded right to humanitarian assistance for those in need. An effective and comprehensive refugee response required a broad collection of stakeholders to work together to identify and implement durable solutions. She emphasized the urgency of swift action, effective coordination and the provision of assistance and protection to those in need without discrimination.

31. She expressed appreciation for UNHCR's efforts to scale up its response to meet urgent needs while recognizing the dangers that humanitarian workers, including UNHCR staff, were facing. She acknowledged the role played by countries hosting refugees and their communities in the provision of support and asylum to the large numbers of displaced persons. Their leadership, generosity and compassion was truly valued and should be emulated by all countries. The decision of the European Union and its Member States to grant temporary protection to those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine was clear evidence of a strong spirit of humanitarianism. Her Government had committed 125 million Canadian dollars to support the humanitarian response and had established new measures for those forced to flee, including new immigration streams for temporary and permanent residence. The response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine should not divert attention from other forced displacement contexts around the world, but should serve as a reminder of the need to support one another.

32. **Ms. Díaz-Rato Revuelta** (Spain) strongly condemned the aggression perpetrated by the Government of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, an act that violated the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, posed a risk to global security, had led millions to flee their homes and had caused serious damage to schools, hospitals and other basic infrastructure. She urged the Government of the Russian Federation to allow unrestricted access to humanitarian organizations; establish and respect humanitarian corridors to facilitate civilian evacuations; cease its use of force immediately and without conditions; and abide by its human rights commitments and international humanitarian law.

33. Spain's borders remained open to those fleeing the aggression regardless of their nationality in line with the unanimous agreement among the Member States of the European Union to ensure temporary protection. Actions should be guided by the principle of solidarity, as demonstrated by the exemplary efforts of the governments of countries including Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova. She thanked UNHCR for quickly mobilizing on the ground to assess the situation of refugees.

34. The actions of the Government of the Russian Federation, supported by the Government of Belarus, must not go unpunished, and all avenues must be explored to avoid the suffering of innocent people. Her Government had joined others in referring the situation in Ukraine for investigation by the International Criminal Court and had supported the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate violations of human rights in the current context. She underscored the historic significance of the actions taken by all parties and expressed solidarity with Russian citizens who had protested against the war.

35. **Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan), speaking via video link, strongly condemned the invasion of Ukraine by the Government of the Russian Federation as an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force that undermined the international order and violated international law. His Government stood with the Government and people of Ukraine in their efforts to defend their sovereignty, territory and families. The Japanese Government had provided over \$100 million in emergency humanitarian assistance and was in the process of sending humanitarian materials to Ukraine through neighbouring countries. In the spirit of solidarity, his country would accept individuals evacuated from Ukraine to third countries.

36. **Ms. Smith** (Norway) strongly condemned the attack by the Government of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, a clear violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and condemned the Government of Belarus for enabling and assisting that act of aggression. She expressed concern at the destruction and human suffering caused by the invasion and escalation of conflict and highlighted the particular vulnerability of women and children. Her Government would offer temporary collective protection to people fleeing Ukraine. She supported the efforts of UNHCR and partners to organize a protection response for internally displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries, and called for full, unimpeded and safe access for all humanitarian actors to communities affected by the conflict. She noted the extraordinary efforts being made by Ukraine's neighbouring countries and called on Member States to scale up their support in line with growing needs while also maintaining their strong support for the responses to crises in other countries and regions. Financial support should be flexible to allow an effective and timely response to changing needs on the ground. The Government and people of Ukraine would have the unwavering support of her Government.

37. **Mr. Gaffey** (Ireland) said that UNHCR and its staff continued to demonstrate strong leadership, compassion and continuous innovation despite the growing scale and complexity of the issues under the Organization's remit. Governments must continue to respond to the needs of people forced to flee their homes across the world and must redouble their efforts to tackle the root causes.

38. The unprovoked and unjustified further invasion of Ukraine by the Government of the Russian Federation was causing destruction to basic infrastructure and harm to the people of Ukraine, including through planned, targeted attacks in cities. He noted that most of those fleeing the country were women, children and elderly people and that women and girls in particular were especially vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse during conflicts; he therefore called for their rights to be protected at all times. The humanitarian impact of the war would also be felt beyond Europe given the implications for food security and development in African and Asian countries that were heavily reliant on imported agricultural products.

39. He reaffirmed his Government's unequivocal condemnation of the military invasion by the Government of the Russian Federation, abetted by the Government of Belarus, which would be held accountable for their actions. His Government stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, who were demonstrating exceptional courage and resilience, and commended the generosity of neighbouring countries, their citizens and civil societies in providing food and shelter to refugees. The Government of Ireland would disburse a further €10 million in humanitarian assistance to support the response of the United Nations to the crisis, which would include significant support to UNHCR. He appealed to all countries to keep their borders open to those seeking safety and protection.

40. **Ms. Kos** (Croatia) said that the unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine by the Government of the Russian Federation was causing a refugee crisis that was unprecedented in its pace, scale and structure. Furthermore, the population affected was extremely vulnerable and the ubiquity of digital technology was heightening the visibility of the situation. Croatia had been a victim of aggression and a host country for refugees and internally displaced persons during the conflict that followed the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, and UNHCR assistance during that time had been critical. For many in Europe, the destruction and loss of life in Ukraine was reminiscent of that dark period.

41. While it remained important to assist all people in need worldwide, the crisis in Ukraine presented a new level of danger given its potential global impact. Its political consequences had



already begun to emerge, exemplified in the growing threat of nuclear accidents and rising food and energy prices. Most of those fleeing were women, children and elderly people, and nearly 500,000 were third-country nationals, which included a substantial proportion of Ukraine's students. Her Government was committed to ensuring their right to safe passage without discrimination. It was concerning that more than 12 million Ukrainians were already in dire need of drinking water, food and clothing. She therefore called on the Government of the Russian Federation to order a ceasefire that would be respected and for two-way humanitarian corridors to ensure unhindered humanitarian assistance.

42. Her Government had joined the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism to supply material resources to Ukraine and was making every effort to welcome refugees from Ukraine. Her Government was thankful for the immediate assistance provided by all countries bordering Ukraine, which had opened their borders and hearts to refugees, and was providing assistance to the Government of the Republic of Moldova to support that work. She called on the Government of the Russian Federation to abide by international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure were not military targets and must be protected at all costs, and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and health workers must also be guaranteed. She commended the work of UNHCR and other partners that were delivering aid in Ukraine and scaling up operations in neighbouring countries, and called for united efforts to achieve peace.

43. **Ms. Szucs** (Hungary) condemned in the strongest possible terms the invasion of Ukraine by the Government of the Russian Federation, which constituted a flagrant violation of international law. She reaffirmed her Government's unwavering support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. As a neighbouring country, her Government's priority remained the safety and protection of the Hungarian people. However, Hungary's border crossing points remained open and the Government would grant entry to all persons fleeing the war without restriction or discrimination on any basis. The Government had passed legislation to enable Ukrainian students and workers to enter Hungary without a visa, and had extended an offer to Indian citizens who had been studying in Ukraine to complete their studies in Hungary. Citizens of other countries had been provided with passage to airports in order to return home, including staff members from the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and several diplomatic missions that had been working in Ukraine. Despite having to relocate from Kyiv, Hungarian diplomatic representatives remained in Ukraine and would provide help as required.

44. The Government of Hungary had launched its largest ever humanitarian relief operation, providing refugees and internally displaced persons with medical supplies, food, water, hygiene and childcare products, fuel and other essential goods. The Government had provided €1.6 million to the Hungarian Interchurch Aid organization to support its humanitarian work and had donated ventilators, fuel and food to Ukraine. She applauded all civil society organizations that had supported refugees in Hungary and expressed appreciation for the work of the United Nations and its partners, commending the dedication and courage of humanitarian staff, partners and volunteers.

45. Her Government called for a peaceful resolution of the war without delay, in order to immediately alleviate the suffering of people affected by the crisis.

46. **Ms. Palladi** (Republic of Moldova) welcomed the support provided to her Government since the outbreak of the war. The unprecedented humanitarian crisis had seen over two million people flee their homes and 100 civilian deaths had been confirmed. Those numbers would only increase, and the humanitarian impact in Ukraine and the surrounding region was of serious concern. Approximately 260,000 people had entered the Republic of Moldova from Ukraine, and the refugee flow had pushed the capacity of the Moldovan authorities to the limit. The Government had simplified entry procedures for refugees and asylum seekers, and had set up a single crisis management centre to coordinate efforts and store and distribute aid donated by national and international organizations, private initiatives and volunteers. Flows of refugees were managed through accommodation centres, at which people could also access health, immigration and social services. She commended those countries that had agreed to receive refugees, and highlighted the need to consider the particular needs of the refugees concerned, who were largely women, children or elderly persons. They would require accommodation, food and appropriate access to health care

and education. She thanked bilateral partners, international organizations and private entities for their support to effectively manage the increasing human and humanitarian crisis and said that her Government stood ready to continue its cooperation with UNHCR.

47. **Mr. Aspelund** (Iceland) expressed serious concern regarding the plight of the Ukrainian people and condemned in the strongest possible terms the unprovoked and unjustified attack by the Government of the Russian Federation. The consequences of that action would have a terrible impact on Ukraine and the world as a whole. Nearly two million refugees had already left Ukraine, the majority of whom were women and children, and he commended neighbouring countries for maintaining open borders and showing hospitality. The international community must not forget those who had remained in Ukraine, having been displaced internally or being unable to leave as a result of aerial or ground attacks on civilian infrastructures. Such attacks were a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and must stop; adherence to international law was not optional. Unhindered humanitarian access, including freedom of movement, must be guaranteed and precautions should be taken to guarantee the safety of civilians and humanitarian and medical workers. The entire international community should stand in solidarity with Ukraine and its neighbouring countries, and welcome Ukrainian refugees. His Government was already receiving Ukrainian citizens, continuing its refugee resettlement programme. It remained committed to providing unearmarked multi-year financial contributions, and in addition it had allocated 300 million Icelandic krónur in flexible funding to humanitarian actors working in and around Ukraine, including UNHCR. The global burden of humanitarian need was already high, and the international community should work together in solidarity, unity and compassion to meet that need.

48. **Mr. Grima** (Malta) said that the humanitarian crisis unfolding in and around Ukraine was of breath-taking proportions, with over 1.5 million refugees having crossed into neighbouring countries and many others displaced internally within Ukraine. His Government called on the Government of the Russian Federation to allow civilian evacuations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to take place without interference through humanitarian corridors. Recalling the non-negotiable protections set out in international humanitarian law, including for children, he condemned the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression committed by the Russian Government in Ukraine, which violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations. He acknowledged UNHCR's crucial role in the unfolding crisis and commended its work in that region. His Government would continue to do its part to assist refugees in line with the decision adopted by the Council of the European Union to introduce temporary protection.

49. **Ms. Saarsalu-Layachi** (Estonia) recognized the fast-growing refugee crisis resulting from the Russian Government's senseless invasion of Ukraine, which was in violation of international law, and acknowledged the ongoing violations of international humanitarian law. The devastating consequences of that aggression for all States could not be overstated. Condemning the invasion in the strongest possible terms, she said that her Government would continue to support the Government and people of Ukraine, and encouraged the international community to join those efforts. The escalating security situation was hindering the delivery of humanitarian operations; safe access to humanitarian assistance must be ensured for all, and civilians must be allowed to leave if they wished to do so, without discrimination. She commended all stakeholders, including UNHCR, for their work to alleviate the extreme human suffering in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Humanitarian workers must be able to work in safety, and she reiterated the importance of abiding by international norms and respecting international law in that regard. Hospitals, schools and kindergartens should never be the target of attacks. Furthermore, her Government condemned the involvement of the Government of Belarus, and called on it to abide by its international obligations. She recalled United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-11/1, adopted in March 2022, and highlighted its clear message that the war must end and that humanitarian corridors must be established for the safe passage of civilians.

50. The Government of Estonia had ensured that its borders remained open to everyone in need, and had allocated €1.3 million towards the initial cost of accepting people displaced by the war in Ukraine, who already numbered more than two million. She commended the solidarity and hospitality of all countries currently hosting refugees in the region. Her Government would continue to meet the needs of vulnerable people, especially women, children and the elderly, both bilaterally and through the work of international organizations. It had already pledged €1 million towards

humanitarian assistance, and she said that Estonian civil society and private sector entities had donated more than €5 million to support the work of non-governmental organizations. However, no amount of aid could compensate for the loss of life, and the war must stop.

51. **Mr. Staniulis** (Lithuania) condemned in the strongest possible terms the unprovoked aggression being carried out by the Government of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and the actions taken by the Government of Belarus to enable that aggression. He called for the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-11/1. Despite claims to the contrary by the Russian Government, civilian infrastructure, including residential neighbourhoods and medical and educational facilities, food and water access points and power installations, had been targeted in attacks. Such action constituted a violation of international law. The protection of civilians was an obligation and all those who violated that protection must be held accountable. Humanitarian corridors should be established, maintained and protected, in order to ensure the safe passage of civilians, the safety of humanitarian workers, and the timely and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for those who remained in Ukraine. He expressed concern for the safety of the most vulnerable groups, including children, women, elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and emphasized that the effects of the war on children in particular would be long-lasting.

52. His Government had long supported the Government of Ukraine, and had mobilized more than \$12 million in additional resources to address immediate humanitarian needs, sending medical supplies, food and other aid and receiving Ukrainians fleeing from the war. Government actions were being matched and surpassed by civil society, both in Lithuania and in the countries that neighboured Ukraine. He welcomed the efforts undertaken by United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, particularly those carried out under dangerous conditions. However, the humanitarian response would need to match the increasing levels of need resulting from the ongoing aggression.

53. **Ms. Gorely** (Australia) likewise strongly condemned the unprovoked and unjustified attack by the Government of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, which was a gross violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and called for an immediate withdrawal of all forces from Ukraine. She expressed concern regarding the humanitarian cost of the conflict, including the loss of life. Noting the estimate that more than two million Ukrainians had already fled to neighbouring countries, and that more than one million people were displaced within Ukraine, she thanked UNHCR and other humanitarian partners for mobilizing quickly to provide a coordinated and effective response. She urged all parties to uphold international humanitarian law, and allow the full, unimpeded and sustained access of humanitarian workers to those in need. The failure to establish humanitarian corridors for that purpose, and for the safe passage of departing civilians, was disappointing. She called on the Russian Government to honour those corridors, and called for the establishment of an emergency notification system that would facilitate the safe movement of humanitarian convoys and flights. She urged UNHCR to consider the particular risks facing vulnerable groups as they were displaced, including the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and the lack of access to health care and other services, and to ensure access to assistance irrespective of language or cultural background. Lessons learned on mainstreaming age, gender and diversity should be applied to the current emergency response. She thanked the governments of the countries neighbouring Ukraine for maintaining open borders and for generously hosting refugees, and expressed appreciation for the decision of the Council of the European Union to introduce temporary protection measures. The Government of Australia had committed an initial package of 35 million Australian dollars to meet urgent needs, including 10 million dollars for UNHCR, and was prioritizing visa applications from Ukrainian nationals.

54. **Mr. Anzen** (Sweden) expressed his disbelief that the world's fastest growing refugee crisis was happening in Europe and said that the invasion of Ukraine was a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. His Government condemned the aggression in the strongest possible terms and noted that the full responsibility for the humanitarian catastrophe lay with the Russian Government. He welcomed UNHCR's rapid mobilization to support affected populations in Ukraine and in those countries that were hosting people fleeing from Ukraine. The international community should work together in solidarity to support refugees from the region, as demonstrated by the decision of the Council of the European Union to introduce temporary protection for displaced persons. He expressed concern that the capacity of humanitarian actors was

being hampered by safety concerns; hostilities against civilians and civilian targets must be stopped to allow for safe and unhindered humanitarian access and to guarantee the safe passage of departing civilians, in accordance with international humanitarian law. UNHCR should remain particularly responsive to the needs of women and girls in the current crisis, ensuring effective prevention against human trafficking and sexual and gender-based violence.

55. In response to the immediate crisis, his Government had allocated an additional \$76 million in humanitarian assistance, which would include approximately \$10 million in flexible support for UNHCR's operations, in addition to its regular, flexible funding. Flexible donations were essential to ensuring humanitarian actors were able to conduct contingency planning, and respond rapidly to scale up activities. However, appeals for financial support in Ukraine should not come at the expense of assisting people in other humanitarian crises around the world.

56. **Ms. Stasch** (Germany), speaking via video link and recalling the purpose of the United Nations to uphold peace and save future generations from the scourge of war, said that the unprovoked and unjustified aggression by the Government of the Russian Federation was a violation of international law and fundamental human rights. The United Nations General Assembly had passed resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 condemning the aggression, and discussions in the Human Rights Council had reaffirmed that human rights also applied in times of war. Her Government condemned the attack carried out by the Russian Government on a free and sovereign country. The resulting humanitarian crisis was the sole responsibility of the leaders of the Russian Federation, and she called on that Government to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law and to cease all military operations and withdraw in order to allow for the safe return of Ukrainians to their homes. Attacks must not target civilians or civilian infrastructures, and humanitarian and medical personnel assigned to medical duties must be protected. Humanitarian corridors must be established to evacuate civilians and ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access.

57. She recognized that the countries neighbouring Ukraine had opened their borders and provided shelter, medical care, transport and other support, and commended the outpouring of support to those in need from within the European Union and from other Member States. She urged all governments to provide refuge for displaced persons, without discrimination. She highlighted the introduction of legislation to provide temporary protection for displaced persons alongside access to labour markets, education, health care and other public services. She commended UNHCR and its partners for their important work in coordinating the humanitarian response, and applauded staff members deployed in the field at great personal risk. Her Government would continue to stand in solidarity with the people and Government of Ukraine, as well as all those who had been forced to flee their homes worldwide.

58. **Mr. Macieira** (Portugal) said that many new conflicts had arisen over the previous two years that had caused people to seek refuge in Europe, and noted that responses had been hampered by the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019. In addition, the unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the Government of the Russian Federation, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, had sparked a major humanitarian crisis. His Government condemned that action, which was backed by the Government of Belarus, and called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all military forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. He reiterated his Government's support for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. He commended the generosity being shown in countries neighbouring Ukraine to those who had fled to seek security, and said that his Government stood ready to share the burden and welcome those in need of international protection. He recognized the efforts made by United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners, including UNHCR and civil society organizations, to deliver humanitarian assistance, despite logistical and security challenges; that assistance should be provided without discrimination. His Government had approved a package of special measures to host refugees from Ukraine in order to respond to their fundamental needs for housing, jobs and education. It had also contributed to the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism and had sent medicines and emergency equipment to the Ukrainian border in Poland. He concluded by urging all parties to comply with their obligations arising from international humanitarian law.

59. **Mr. Bichler** (Luxembourg) condemned in the strongest possible terms the aggression by the Russian Government against Ukraine. The Government of Luxembourg supported the efforts under way in the United Nations Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution to establish an independent international commission of inquiry for Ukraine. He reiterated his Government's concern regarding the allegations of acts of discrimination against nationals of African countries fleeing the conflict, and recalled the importance of respecting the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Government of Luxembourg had announced that it would provide its humanitarian partners with an immediate aid package of €3 million. It had also sent 50 tonnes of medical and firefighting equipment worth over €3 million to Ukraine. The Luxembourg authorities were also preparing the capacities required to accommodate and support refugees arriving from Ukraine. A first reception centre had just been established, which offered shelter for the first few days for persons wishing to seek protection in Luxembourg and those travelling to other European countries.

60. **Mr. Jalagania** (Georgia) condemned the aggression being carried out in Ukraine by the Russian Government and the violation of the agreement on the opening of humanitarian corridors, which had reportedly led to civilian deaths. The projected total number of refugees was of extreme concern. The Georgian Government, citizens and businesses had offered free overnight accommodation and other assistance for Ukrainians who had entered the country before the war and who were unable to return to Ukraine due to the Russian military invasion. His Government had delivered humanitarian aid, including medical supplies, and humanitarian aid centres were operating in several locations throughout Georgia. Accounts had also been opened for financial donations to support the Ukrainian people. His country had also experienced aggression and occupation by the Russian Government in the past, with over half a million Georgian refugees and internally displaced persons still unable to return to their homes. He recalled the judgment by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Georgia v. Russia (II), which had legally established the responsibility of the Russian Government for the violation of the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes, and which had concluded that the Russian Government had an obligation to enable inhabitants of Georgian origin to do so.

61. **Ms. Pipan** (Slovenia) said that her Government condemned most strongly the unjustified and unlawful invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, and was appalled by the increasing number of civilian casualties caused by the Russian aggression. The Slovenian Government was providing humanitarian aid and was already welcoming Ukrainian refugees arriving at its accommodation centre. It had also provided technical and medical equipment amounting to €163,000 and would allocate €1.1 million through OCHA, UNHCR, Caritas Internationalis and the ICRC.

62. **Mr. Hasans** (Latvia) condemned most strongly the Russian Government's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, and also condemned the Belarusian Government for enabling Russian attacks, thereby becoming an aggressor itself. The Latvian Government had allocated €7.2 million in support to Ukraine, which would include contributions to international organizations providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine, rehabilitation in Latvia for Ukrainian soldiers and their main family members, assistance for representatives of Ukraine and Ukrainian institutions in emergency situations, and the provision of necessary support for independent media and journalists in Ukraine. The support would also allow the Latvian Government to respond to the Moldovan Government's request for assistance with Ukrainian refugees. His Government had already provided several shipments of aid to Ukraine and would send more. Latvian civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector were also organizing assistance. The Latvian Parliament had recently passed a law enabling Ukrainian citizens and their family members who had left Ukraine or who could not return to the country owing to the conflict to receive long-term visas free of charge and to work in Latvia, including those who were unable to provide the necessary documentation.

63. **Ms. Tichy-Fisslberger** (Austria) said that her Government condemned the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression by the Russian Government in Ukraine, which was an attack not only on another independent sovereign State but also on the aspirations of the Ukrainian people to freedom and democracy. The Austrian Government expressed its full solidarity with Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government and the Ukrainian people, and stood ready to accept refugees from the country. When civilians in neighbouring countries were threatened, it was indispensable to help, in

the spirit of solidarity. For Ukrainian refugees who filed asylum applications in Austria, the competent authorities would also examine the granting of international protection under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Subsidiary and humanitarian protection would remain on an individual case-by-case basis. Her Government would contribute a further €15 million in assistance for Ukraine, €3.5 million of which would be allocated to UNHCR, which brought the total contributions in 2022 by the Austrian Government from its foreign disaster relief fund to Ukraine and its neighbours to €17.5 million. The Austrian Government had also provided in-kind donations to Ukraine and its neighbours via the Civil Protection Mechanism amounting to €600,000, and private donors had already contributed more than €6 million. It was vital to ensure the preservation of civilian structures and their ability to provide basic services to the population. Victims, in particular children, would require assistance from mental health and psychological support services, due to trauma suffered as a result of the war and displacement. A particular emphasis must be placed on resilience and inclusion, in line with a human rights-based approach, and on the needs of vulnerable groups.

64. Her Government was appalled by the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, schools, hospitals, water and electricity facilities, and by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which were heinous acts potentially amounting to war crimes. Perpetrators must and would be held accountable for the violation of the relevant international laws. She called upon all parties to the conflict, but particularly the Russian Federation, to strictly abide by their obligation to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, many rules of which had been drafted in St Petersburg and to whose development the Russian Federation had richly contributed in the past.

65. **Mr. Ahmad** (Chad, Group statement), speaking on behalf of the African Group, expressed concern regarding the discrimination experienced by Africans in Ukraine who, like all those fleeing the conflict, required shelter. He called on all countries in the region to demonstrate the same warm reception and solidarity to every individual escaping the war, including African students. His Group stood ready to engage with all partners and countries in the region to find solutions to assist the persons affected by the conflict.

66. **Mr. Sterk** (Bulgaria) said that the Bulgarian Government deplored and condemned in the strongest possible terms the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Such actions were unacceptable in the 21st century and should be objected to by the international community by all legitimate means. He also condemned the involvement of the Belarusian Government in the conflict. His Government stood in solidarity with the governments of Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Republic of Moldova, which had demonstrated humanity and strong empathy for the suffering of citizens fleeing Ukraine. The Bulgarian Government had already provided in-kind humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian population via the Civil Protection Mechanism. Additional assistance, coordinated by the Bulgarian Red Cross, was on its way to Ukraine, and his Government planned to provide further humanitarian aid via different humanitarian actors on the ground. Over 43,000 Ukrainians had already entered Bulgaria since the beginning of the conflict, and the Bulgarian authorities, local communities and Bulgarian Red Cross were providing the assistance required to meet the needs of the refugees. His Government expressed recognition for the courage and human and personal devotion of UNHCR in the horrifying situation, and also expressed support for the United Nations Crisis Coordinator for Ukraine, Mr. Amin Awad, as well as for all humanitarian actors on the ground.

67. **Mr. Bálek** (Czechia) condemned the unacceptable behaviour of the Russian Government in Ukraine. His Government stood with Ukraine and had contributed €1 million to UNHCR's efforts through its Aid in Place Programme. It was also currently providing bilateral in-kind and health-related cash assistance worth almost €1 million, and had recently allocated over €12 million for continued urgent humanitarian aid focused on Ukraine and refugees from Ukraine in neighbouring countries. The Czech Government was ready to receive refugees, for whom it had prepared a programme worth €60 million. It had significantly accelerated the visa regime and reopened the emergency scholarship programme for Ukrainians in the country. Reception capacities were facing increasing demand, with an estimated 100,000 refugees from Ukraine having already arrived in the country. In the event of further movements, his Government would seek to expand cooperation and material assistance in Czechia.

68. **Ms. Kazakova** (Russian Federation) said that, as a party to the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, her Government provided foreign citizens with reliable protection regardless of their country of origin, religion, nationality or race, in the form of refugee status or temporary asylum. Russian national legislation on asylum was constantly being improved. Since 2014, the Russian Federation had received over one million citizens from Ukraine, 445,000 of whom had received asylum. Emergency arrangements had been introduced to address the significant increase in the numbers of citizens arriving in the Russian Federation from Ukraine, and Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. Since 4 March 2022, over 142,000 people had arrived in the Russian Federation. More than 18,000 people had been placed in 261 accommodation centres, and a further 831 facilities had been prepared across the country with a total capacity of over 62,000 people. Financial, psychological, medical and legal assistance was being provided at temporary accommodation facilities.

69. Her Government was particularly concerned about the issue of statelessness in a number of European countries. UNHCR should recognize the existence of the issue and continue working towards the reduction of statelessness, primarily in Europe. Since 1992, the Russian Government had granted citizenship to around 800,000 stateless persons within the country. Recent changes to national legislation had made it possible to issue temporary identity cards to stateless persons and thus regulate their legal status.

70. **Mr. Madsen** (Denmark) said that the statement made by the Russian delegate had given the impression that the current priorities were very different from those that had been voiced in the past hours. However, his Government was not convinced by it. The facts on the ground were known and, on behalf of his country, he wished to set the record straight. The world was experiencing a dark moment in history due to Russian actions, and he condemned in the strongest possible terms the Russian war on Ukraine. His Government had already committed \$42 million to meet the immediate humanitarian needs in Ukraine and was prepared to do more. It was ready to welcome all refugees seeking shelter from the war in Ukraine within its borders, and had scaled up its reception capacity.

71. **Mr. Davalos** (Ecuador) condemned the military aggression by the Russian Government in Ukraine and called for an immediate halt to the hostilities. His Government had implemented an emergency plan to evacuate over 800 Ecuadorian citizens residing in Ukraine.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*