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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee

Report of the fifty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee (26-27 June 2012)*

Report of the Secretariat

* Late submission due to the adoption of the draft report during the fifty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee which was held on 18-19 September 2012.

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I. Introduction

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Jan Knutsson (Sweden), opened the meeting and extended a special welcome to the two new members of the Executive Committee: Azerbaijan and Rwanda, elected by the Economic and Social Council on 26 April 2012. He also welcomed Albania, the Dominican Republic, Latvia and Uruguay as new observers. Before moving to the adoption of the agenda, the Chairperson provided an oral report on his recent field mission to Zambia. The Vice-Chairperson, Her Excellency Ambassador Alicia Arango Olmos (Colombia), chaired the meeting during agenda items 5 to 9.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The agenda for the meeting (EC/63/SC/CRP.10) was adopted.

III. Adoption of the draft report of the fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee

3. The report of the fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee (EC/63/SC/CRP.9) was adopted, with the addition of a new paragraph under 3(d), reflected as paragraph 21 in the final version.

IV. International protection

A. Note on international protection

4. Following an update by the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) on the Office's work on protracted refugee situations and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the Director of the Division on International Protection presented the Note on International Protection (EC/63/SC/CRP.11). The Director observed that the reporting period was characterized by successive emergencies, in particular in West and North Africa and the Middle East, resulting in large-scale displacements. Themes in the Director's presentation included: immigration detention and detention reform; human trafficking and smuggling; the sensitization of border officials to maritime protection issues; preventing and resolving statelessness, in particular by remedying gender inequality in citizenship laws; the integration of field needs and global initiatives for the protection of internally displaced persons, and promoting the development of law and policy on internal displacement; protection responses for particularly vulnerable persons of concern to UNHCR, especially in the area of education, child protection, persons with disabilities, and SGBV; and the relevance of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees for the protection of people fleeing armed conflict and other situations of violence.

5. During the debate, 45 delegations took the floor, many sharing positive reports on initial steps their Governments had taken to implement pledges made during the December 2011 Intergovernmental event at ministerial level of United Nations Member States, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Many States commended UNHCR for its emergency response to the multiple new humanitarian emergencies in 2011-2012. In their confirmation of the principle of *non-refoulement*,

Member States expressed deep concern for recent instances of *refoulement* and urged all States to respect their international obligations, including in the context of national security, access to territory, and burden sharing arrangements. Member States also expressed concern regarding the prevalence of SGBV, especially towards women and girls. Delegations recognized the need to empower women and girls, for example through education, self-reliance and development initiatives, and a focus on access to justice for victims and survivors of SGBV.

6. A global increase in the number of urban refugees was also noted, with States calling for a more proactive approach to the common obstacles that confront refugees in urban areas, such as lack of access to documentation and services, as well as, at the extreme end, exploitation and recourse to “survival sex.”

7. Burden-sharing was highlighted by many States as core to the international protection regime, yet without losing sight of States’ primary obligation to protect refugees on their territory. Many States provided updates on new national laws and procedures on asylum or statelessness, as well as those under development; while others reported on ongoing quality initiatives being carried out in cooperation with UNHCR. The European Asylum Support Office and the forthcoming Regional Support Office, established as part of the Bali Process, were also mentioned.

8. UNHCR received support for its work on durable solutions, especially in respect of protracted refugee situations, including: the Transitional Solutions Initiative; the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees to support Voluntary Repatriation, Sustainable Reintegration and Assistance to Host Countries; the regional initiative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia to resolve displacement stemming from the 1991-1995 conflict; the comprehensive solutions strategies in respect of the Angolan, Liberian and Rwandan refugees; and the strategic use of resettlement.

9. UNHCR was also called upon to take measures to closely monitor situations of distress at sea and to provide assistance to States in order to prevent tragedies. Several delegations recognized the need for strategies to deal with the increase in the number of stateless persons and encouraged UNHCR to continue its activities regarding birth registration and legislative reform.

10. Concern for the security of staff and the growing need for financial assistance were also expressed, and States encouraged the international community to continue to extend financial support to the Office.

11. In response, the Director acknowledged the importance of developing strong and sustainable asylum systems, while expanding upon intra-regional cooperation, burden sharing and partnerships. UNHCR welcomed the opportunity to work with States and NGOs on issues pertaining to SGBV as well as child asylum-seekers, emphasizing that protection cannot be carried out in isolation and requires good governance and civil society partnerships.

B. Progress report on resettlement

12. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection presented the Progress report on resettlement (EC/63/SC/CRP.12) and noted the need to enhance efforts to increase the number of resettlement places. She highlighted significant developments as well as key challenges, including: global resettlement capacity; the speed of resettlement processing; resettlement within emergency response mechanisms; resettlement as part of comprehensive solutions; reception and integration of resettled refugees; and resettlement management, coordination and partnerships. Both the Deputy Director and Member States welcomed adoption of the joint European Union resettlement programme, which is

expected to increase the number of resettlement opportunities and achieve a more harmonized response to resettlement priorities. She also highlighted the critical role of the three emergency transit facilities hosted by Romania, Slovakia and the Philippines.

13. While the Committee welcomed a number of positive developments including several new resettlement countries and the expansion of existing programmes, serious concern was expressed regarding the gap between needs and places available, the decline in number of submissions and departures, and the use of selective criteria by some countries. There were calls for UNHCR to help rectify the imbalance by advocating with resettlement countries and the broader international community to initiate and expand resettlement programmes and quotas, and to increase the efficiency of resettlement procedures. A number of Member States reported their satisfaction with using innovative processing methods, such as resettlement interviewing by video-conferencing. States called for continued effort to identify the most vulnerable refugees, in particular women and girls at risk, and to prioritize them for resettlement.

14. There was broad support for the strategic use of resettlement, including as a means of international solidarity and burden sharing for host countries. A number of delegations highlighted that the burden of providing protection for refugees was still disproportionately borne by developing countries. Given that 90 per cent of resettlement places were provided by three countries, one State suggested that UNHCR should be pragmatic about the efforts and resources expended for resettlement as compared with other durable solutions, such as voluntary repatriation. It was further suggested that the comprehensive solutions strategy and interplay among the durable solutions needed further examination by the Committee.

15. In response to a request that the working group on resettlement undertake consultations with host countries, the Deputy Director advised that this was not possible due to technical reasons but that she would relay the request to those involved and look into organizing a briefing session for interested delegations. She also referred to Executive Committee Conclusion No. 109 of 2009, on protracted refugee situations, which reiterated that voluntary repatriation was the preferred durable solution, but also recognized the complementarity of solutions and the need to apply them in different ways depending on the situation. In closing, the Deputy Director thanked all States involved in resettlement for their continued support and efforts.

C. Oral update on follow-up to the Intergovernmental event at ministerial level

16. The Director of the Division of International Protection reported on the outcome of the Intergovernmental event at ministerial level, which took place in Geneva in December 2011. The Director welcomed the many positive pledges made by States during the event and stated that UNHCR looked forward to working with States on their implementation. In addition to a strong commitment to core protection principles in the form of the Ministerial Communiqué, more than 100 States made pledges, including more than 40 which made pledges related to statelessness.

17. The Director noted the availability of a preview of the publication containing all pledges made during the December 2011 event, advising that UNHCR planned to distribute a final publication containing all the pledges at the annual meeting of the Executive Committee.

18. Questions were raised about monitoring mechanisms to track advances in the implementation of pledges. The Director informed delegations that UNHCR maintained an internal tracking matrix, which would be used to report back to the Executive Committee on an annual basis in the Note on International Protection. The Director also invited States

to include an update on their pledges in their statements at the annual meeting of the Executive Committee; he noted that four countries had already made serious progress in relation to their pledges, including passing the required legislation for accession to the statelessness instruments, while five other States had already implemented their accessions to one or both of these instruments. The Director added that UNHCR offices in the Field were tracking pledges and engaged in efforts to support States with implementation.

19. Delegations were pleased to hear that so many States had already taken significant action on their pledges, and support was provided for the idea of having States update on their pledges during the annual meeting of the Executive Committee.

D. Oral update on informal consultations regarding Executive Committee Conclusions

20. The Rapporteur made a presentation on the progress that had been made during informal consultations on the negotiation of Executive Committee Conclusions, specifically in relation to the draft modalities paper that had been circulated to Member States. She noted that a series of meetings would be held to refine the text of the paper, with the intention of presenting a final text to the Standing Committee in September.

21. Several delegations reiterated the long-standing importance of Conclusions on International Protection, underscoring their desire to see the negotiation process strengthened through these discussions and expressing their appreciation for the work of the Rapporteur. One Member State pointed out that the Conclusions on International Protection remain a valuable tool and point of reference for States and other partners. Several States underscored that Conclusions are intended to address an identified gap in guidance and that care should be exercised in the selection of issues to be addressed.

V. Programme/protection policy

A. International protection of children of concern, including education

22. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection presented the paper on international protection of children of concern, including education (EC/63/SC/CRP.13). States welcomed UNHCR's efforts to enhance protection for children of concern and noted the progress made since the last report, including the launch of three complementary policies: *Framework for the Protection of Children (2012)*, *Education Strategy (2012-2016)* and *Action Against SGBV: An Updated Strategy (2011)*. States expressed their concern for the protection of children in displacement; their commitment to children's protection as an investment in the future; and the need for greater coordination with UN partner agencies to maximize the use of available resources in difficult budget times.

23. The imperative of State leadership and strong national systems, which educate and protect all children, was a central theme in the discussion. One Member State presented a vision of national child protection systems as rights-based, non-discriminatory and grounded in the principle of the best interests of the child.

24. States acknowledged the importance of global and community partnerships and asked UNHCR to expand on its coordination within the cluster system and specifically with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Deputy Director outlined the links between its leadership role in the Global Protection Cluster and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, led by UNICEF, and updated the Committee on targeted discussions with

UNICEF regarding country-level Letters of Understanding, which will ensure greater predictability in programming.

25. States expressed a common appreciation of education as central to child protection and to achieving durable solutions for children, with several delegations emphasizing the role of higher education in building self-reliance. States also underscored that children's right to education in emergencies requires continued partnership. The *Education Strategy* was seen as an ambitious forward plan, and several States welcomed the creation of 16 education posts, including a regional position in the East and Horn of Africa. While acknowledging the significance of the *Framework for the Protection of Children*, delegations also emphasized the need to translate policy into practice through concrete programmes.

26. In response to concerns expressed about children's risk of sexual exploitation, the Deputy Director acknowledged this as a cross-cutting area of focus, articulated in the education, child protection and SGBV strategies, and indicated that special funds had been allocated by the High Commissioner specifically to address this issue. Regarding the high number of unaccompanied and separated children, the Deputy Director emphasized UNHCR's continued efforts to operationalize the best interests principle (*e.g.* Field Handbook for the Implementation of UNHCR Guidelines on Best Interests Determination (BID)). The Deputy Director indicated that improving staff capacity in child protection, including the quality of BIDs, through targeted deployments, training and e-learning, is a high priority. Several States highlighted the importance of birth registration in establishing a child's legal identity and ensuring access to services, including education.

B. Age, gender and diversity approach

27. The Deputy Director of the Division of International Protection reported on UNHCR's implementation of an Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach (EC/63/SC/CRP.14). This was accompanied by a presentation on the results of UNHCR's AGDM Accountability Framework for 2011-2012.

28. Through its AGD approach, UNHCR's dialogue with persons of concern has been significantly strengthened, leading to a deeper understanding of needs and capacities, in particular for groups with specific needs, and enhanced protection delivery. Full and equal participation of all persons of concern was outlined as integral to increasing access to protection, and concrete examples were presented on how the AGD approach has been used. The High Commissioner's special SGBV project was highlighted, as it encourages country teams to enhance response and prevention through the involvement of men and boys, persons with disabilities, older persons and other marginalized groups. Increased birth registrations, higher retention rates of girls in school, and a range of targeted responses for the Horn of Africa resulting from mainstreaming AGD within programming, were highlighted as examples of AGD in action.

29. Strategic cooperation with expert actors, such as the partnership on disability with the Women's Refugee Commission, and with other expert bodies in respect of the *Need to Know Guidance* series, was highlighted as an important part of the AGD approach. The Deputy Director identified the collection of disaggregated data as a key challenge going forward. Ensuring that participatory assessments fully inform and are reflected in programming is another issue that is being addressed.

30. Several States congratulated UNHCR for progress made, endorsed the AGD approach as essential, and encouraged the organization to continue with its mainstreaming efforts. A number of delegations recognized the value of regular AGD-sensitive participatory assessments and welcomed UNHCR's efforts to further enhance the participatory aspect of its work in the Field. States mirrored UNHCR's desire that AGD be better reflected in programming and expressed concern that emphasis be placed on implementation rather than additional policy and tool development. A number of States acknowledged that actors beyond UNHCR needed to do more in the area of AGD, and welcomed the development of an e-learning course on AGD that will be made available to partners. Some delegations called for more State involvement in UNHCR's AGD efforts. Finally, several States pointed to the need for improved monitoring of AGD impact and accountability.

VI. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources

31. In his introductory statement, the Deputy High Commissioner took the opportunity to brief the Committee on the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC), which met for its first session from 3-6 June 2012. During the session, briefings were provided by senior management, including a number of Regional Bureaux Directors, to introduce the IAOC to the operating environment and challenges faced by the Office. The IAOC also met with representatives from relevant oversight bodies, including with the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Inspector General's Office. During this first session, the IAOC elected a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, in line with the Terms of Reference of the Committee, and prioritized issues to be examined. The next meeting was planned for 11-13 September, and the schedule foreseen for 2013 included meetings in February, June (possibly in Budapest), and September. The Deputy High Commissioner assured the Standing Committee that the IAOC was fully engaged in their mission.

Oral update on the introduction of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS)

32. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management provided an oral update on the status of IPSAS implementation. Despite the transition being more complex than initially envisaged and some delays along the way, all preparatory work was successfully completed by 31 December 2011, enabling the Office to "go live" as of 1 January 2012. Although further work was required to realize the full benefits of IPSAS in the longer term, the Office expected increased transparency, improved management of assets, and enhanced control and understanding of liabilities, income and expenditure. Engagement with the United Nations Board of Auditors (BOA) had intensified this year. The next milestone was the interim audit of the IPSAS opening balances scheduled for July 2012, followed by a second interim audit in November 2012, before the year-end close. UNHCR expected to deliver IPSAS-compliant financial statements for the period ended 31 December 2012.

33. Responding to a question about compliance at the Field level and ensuring that staff have adequate capacity to adhere to IPSAS, the Controller explained that a number of training initiatives and regional capacity-building workshops were taking place in all five regions. These workshops focused on those IPSAS standards which were most relevant to the Field. A number of workshops had also been held at Headquarters. These efforts formed part of a comprehensive change management strategy, adopted during the second

half of 2011, which also included the issuance of newsletters on specific topics, a compilation of frequently asked questions and answers, and a glossary of IPSAS-related terms.

VII. Programme budgets and funding

A. Update on budgets and funding in 2011 and 2012

34. The update on budgets and funding in 2011 and 2012 (EC/SC/63/CRP.15) was presented jointly by the Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, and the Director of the Division of External Relations. The update included a detailed explanation of current financial needs and the supplementary budgets for new emergency interventions.

35. Delegations recognized the enormous challenges faced by UNHCR in light of the increasing number of emergencies in 2011 and 2012. They shared concern about the gap between identified needs and available resources, and encouraged UNHCR approach new donors and the private sector in order to have a fully financed budget. The importance of resolving protracted situations and fully engaging development partners was also stressed. A number of delegations requested more information on the process of prioritization.

36. The Deputy High Commissioner informed the Committee that in response to the funding situation, UNHCR was not only working to identify new sources of income, including from pooled funds, but also taking cost-saving measures. The latter included, for example, the postponement of planned hiring, delaying the purchase of vehicles and equipment, and further reducing travel budgets. The Director of the Division of External Relations added that offices in the Field were approaching partners on the ground and raising funds for their operations locally.

37. At the end of the discussion on this sub-item, the Committee adopted a decision on overall programme budgets and funding for 2012 (see Annex).

B. Global Report on activities in 2011

38. The Director of the Division of External Relations presented the Global Report on UNHCR's work in 2011. She noted that the report is designed to meet the detailed reporting requirements of as many donors as possible, including results-based reporting on the global strategic priorities. Delegations were invited to provide feedback on how to make the report more useful. The publication, which included new chapters on the commemorations of the refugee and statelessness conventions and on emergency response, was already available in English and could be found on UNHCR's website. The Global Report 2011 would be made available in French later in the summer.

VIII. Coordination

A. Update on HIV/AIDS and refugees

39. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) presented the update on HIV/AIDS and refugees (EC/63/SC/CRP.16). While expressing appreciation for the progress achieved by UNHCR, many States recognized that joint efforts through partnerships are a prerequisite for continued progress. The important

relationship with UNAIDS was particularly highlighted, as were joint efforts with the Global Fund to include displaced populations in host governments' national HIV and AIDS programmes. Many States emphasized the need for comprehensive HIV programmes closely linked to public health, protection and community services, with particular attention to gender.

40. The Director expressed appreciation for the encouraging interventions in terms of progress in the area of HIV and AIDS. He reassured Member States that UNHCR will continue working closely with partners and highlighted that the UNAIDS coordination mechanism will be further strengthened through the new membership of UN-Women. He also recognized the need for continued attention to gender-sensitive, comprehensive HIV programmes.

41. Having recently returned from Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, the Deputy Director of DPSM acknowledged that, although 40,000 Malians were known to be receiving anti-retroviral therapy, providing medicines to the Malian refugees at a similar level to their home country is challenging. In relation to prevention, he also clarified that the main barriers to post-exposure prophylaxis for rape survivors were stigma and discrimination at the community level. The Deputy Director noted that, while UNHCR is working to address such challenges, behavioural change is a long-term undertaking.

B. Elements for UNHCR's oral update to the 2012 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

42. The Director of the Division of External Relations briefed the Committee on UNHCR's upcoming oral update on coordination and partnerships during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, identifying three key themes as follows: transitions, protracted situations, and durable solutions; UNHCR's participation in the Transformative Agenda of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee; and coordination with non-governmental organizations. Consistent with the practice of past years, there was no debate on this sub-item, although delegations were invited to submit comments or questions to the Secretary.

IX. Governance

43. The Chairperson explained that the High Commissioner's opening statement at the forthcoming 63rd plenary session of the Executive Committee would form the basis for the session's General Debate. Noting that an outline of the statement's key elements would be shared with delegations in advance, he invited States to share proposals for topics to be included in the High Commissioner's statement.

X. Any other business

44. The Secretary of the Executive Committee noted that, in keeping with recent tradition, the High Commissioner's welcoming reception, co-hosted with the Chairman of the Executive Committee on the occasion of the opening of the annual session of the Executive Committee, would be joined with the Nansen Refugee Award ceremony this year. Both events would therefore take place on the evening of 1 October 2012, the opening day of the 63rd plenary session of the Executive Committee. Invitations would follow during the course of the summer.

45. The Secretary also drew the attention of the Standing Committee to a process of review which UNHCR would undertake at the request of the General Assembly, in consultation with the Executive Committee, as well as the Office of the Secretary-General, over the course of the next year. The Secretary observed that in Resolution 58/153, the General Assembly included a requirement that, in addition to its annual report to the General Assembly, once every 10 years UNHCR would include “a strategic review of the global situation of refugees and the role of the Office.” In compliance with this resolution, the first such 10-year review is to be presented next year at the 68th session of the General Assembly.

46. The Secretary noted that the review would look at how UNHCR has responded to the key challenges of the last 10 years and would consider (1) how global trends and changes to the international system have affected the protection and solutions needs of refugees and others of concern to the Office; and (2) what strategies UNHCR has developed to respond to these changes and needs. The Secretariat would lead the process of the review, which will culminate in a report to be finalized in July 2013 for submission to the General Assembly. The Secretary invited input from Member States at any time and also encouraged States to participate in a series of informal discussions which would be convened on the content of the report. The first such meeting would be held in September 2012, with additional discussions in February and May 2013.

Annex

Decision on budgets and funding for 2011 and 2012

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decisions on administrative, financial and programme matters at its sixty-first and sixty-second sessions (A/AC.96/1095, para. 14 and A/AC.96/1107, para.13), as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the fifty-third meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2012,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

1. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-first session, approved programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's 2010-2011 (revised) Biennial Programme Budget amounting to \$3,320.8 million for 2011;
2. *Notes* that the 2011 supplementary budgets amount to \$500.9 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;
3. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's 2011 Annual Budget amounting to \$3,821.7 million;
4. *Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-second session, approved programmes and budgets for Regional Programmes, Global Programmes and Headquarters under UNHCR's 2012-2013 Biennial Programme Budget amounting to \$3,591.2 million for 2012;
5. *Notes* that the 2012 supplementary budgets currently amount to \$254.1 million for programmes benefiting refugees and internally displaced persons;
6. *Notes* the reduction of \$26 million for the Liberia (\$9.8 million) and Sudan (\$16.2 million) operations;
7. *Notes* the creation of a special account for the Common Humanitarian Pipeline in Sudan, currently funded at \$5.4 million;
8. *Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's 2012 Annual Budget, bringing the revised 2012 Annual Budget to \$3,819.3 million;
9. *Notes* that the funds available for the year 2012 leave a projected shortfall of \$2,058.6 million;
10. *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2012 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets and additional resources to meet such needs; and
11. *Urges* Member States to continue to respond generously, in a spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources, to meet in full the 2012 Annual Budget.