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Summary record of the 751st meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 October 2022, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Baddoura (Lebanon)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Aselo Okito wa Koy** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the current situation, which was characterized by a multitude of different kinds of crises, constituted a substantial obstacle to the mobilization of the resources needed for the assistance of Congolese refugees in several African countries and the millions of internally displaced persons and refugees who had found sanctuary in his country. The eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo was still plagued with armed terrorist groups who were being supported by Rwanda. The lack of security constantly led to the massive displacement of the population within the country and to other countries. In that context, mention should be made of the conflicts between the Teke and Yaka communities in Kwamouth, in Mai-Ndombe Province, which had been triggered by the massive displacement of the population in the adjacent Provinces of Kwango and Kwilu. Recent statistics showed that well over a million Congolese had found sanctuary in neighbouring countries and in southern Africa. Almost 5 million internally displaced persons had mostly settled in rural areas in the region. Ensuring security in certain zones to make them places where returning refugees and internally displaced persons could live was a major challenge and yet it was an essential condition for the return and long-term reintegration of those persons. To that end, military operations were being conducted in certain zones in the east of the country in order to hunt down and neutralize the armed groups.

2. The tripartite agreements with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and host countries had been revived in order to facilitate the return of Congolese refugees in security and dignity. However, repatriation without reintegration could be no more than a temporary solution. He called therefore on the international community to provide support, through UNHCR, for his Government's efforts to fill the shortage of funding for repatriation. The Government deplored the lack of clear information from the UNHCR country office on the use of external resources for aid and investment and the fact that its implementing partners were not obliged to abide by legal cooperation procedures with the National Commission for Refugees. As there were well over 500,000 refugees living in the country, the Government regretted the sizeable reduction in resources for assisting persons in distress. That situation was likely to cause tension between refugees and host communities who had hitherto been prepared to share their meagre resources with them. The same level of attention to other crises, in particular in Ukraine, should also be paid to the situation in his country which, since 1960, had been pursuing an open-door policy towards asylum-seekers that had ultimately had an adverse impact on the environment and the economy. It was necessary to take account of that real situation when UNHCR planned its budget. His country could ratify the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons only after the general census of the whole population had been carried out.

3. **Mr. Obeidat** (Jordan) said that meeting the needs of the unprecedentedly high number of refugees and internally displaced persons represented a challenge for the international community and UNHCR. His country had always striven to provide protection for asylum-seekers and refugees and would never turn its back on them. Over 90 per cent of Jordanians held a favourable view of refugees, despite the high unemployment rate in the country and heavy pressure on public utilities and services. Although it had been shouldering a huge budget deficit of \$2.8 billion, Jordan would continue to provide comprehensive assistance to persons in refugee camps. Over 143,000 Syrian children were attending Jordanian schools. Some 62,000 work permits had been issued to Syrian refugees in 2021 and hospitals were providing refugees with treatment. It was to be hoped that the country's international partners would support those efforts.

4. Jordan was currently formulating a new humanitarian action plan for the period 2023-2025 to address the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities. In pursuance of global agreements on refugees, Jordan was defraying most of the related costs, but it lacked funds to do any more. It was concerned by the rollback of international support for refugees in the region at the very time when the caseload kept growing. That situation undermined the international principle of burden-sharing. The current humanitarian crisis called for a just,

appropriate response so as not to jeopardize the programmes of UNHCR or the principle of humanity. No effort should be spared in seeking political solutions to the various crises in order to restore stability, address the root causes of refugee flows and facilitate the return of refugees to their own countries. It was necessary to pursue cooperation to meet refugees' needs. Jordan would participate in the organization of the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum.

5. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay) said that multiple crises accompanied by violence, discrimination and persecution had inevitably led to the increasing displacement of vulnerable persons all over the world in recent years. Those factors had been exacerbated by the effects of climate change and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and constituted a challenge to the whole multilateral system, the fundamental principles underpinning the protection of refugees and human rights. Against that gloomy backdrop, Paraguay had shown solidarity and had signed the Global Compact on Refugees. At the regional level, it had assisted refugees and asylum-seekers regardless of their legal status. It was committed to respecting their human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and, as a participant in the Quito Process on the Human Mobility of Venezuelan Nationals in the Region, it had signed the joint declaration issued at the conclusion of the Eighth Technical Meeting on Human Mobility of Venezuelan Citizens in the Region. Its region had indeed been greatly affected by the mass influx from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Paraguay's domestic legal framework ensured the implementation of the relevant international conventions and facilitated the naturalization of stateless persons. It considered that observance of the principle of non-refoulement was a precondition for the full observance of human rights and the provision of international protection of refugees.

6. **Mr. Hashim Mostafa** (Observer for Iraq) said that his Government valued the humanitarian assistance that UNHCR gave to refugees and internally displaced persons. Nonetheless, it was deeply concerned about the rising number of refugees and internally displaced persons around the world, which could be ascribed to a number of humanitarian challenges including armed conflict, climate change, water scarcity and the COVID-19 pandemic. Cooperation and international solidarity were therefore vital when it came to devising new approaches to those challenges. Iraq had taken a number of steps to relieve the suffering of internally displaced persons and to enable them to assert their economic and social rights. It had endeavoured to integrate internally displaced children into host communities' schools and to help internally displaced students continue their university education. If internally displaced persons had lost their identity documents they were issued with replacements. A national committee set up for that purpose in 2021 had issued 55,000 identity documents. Good planning and cooperation with stakeholders had helped to contain the crisis and to reduce the number of Iraqi internally displaced persons. Their resettlement was continuing under a national plan adopted in 2021. The programme encompassed action to encourage internally displaced persons to return home voluntarily by providing the requisite infrastructure. Other programmes were designed to promote national reconciliation and rehabilitation. The Government was also trying to clear liberated areas of mines and the remnants of war in cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies. Some 3,000 persons had recently been repatriated from the Al-Hawl camp and it was hoped that everyone living there would be able to return to their places of origin in the near future. In that connection, he urged the international community to make a concerted effort to address the challenges that would arise if the camp continued to exist and those posed by the ongoing activities of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) which had been committing murders and other crimes. Iraq also called on other countries to repatriate their nationals. As it was both a country of transit and a country of destination for refugees from neighbouring countries, Iraq was hosting and providing assistance to hundreds of thousands of refugees in the form of medical treatment, education and other services. It appealed for more international burden-sharing and for the honouring of pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum. It called for a review of the Global Compact on Refugees and for continued international support for host communities.

7. **Mr. Gunnarsson** (Iceland) said that yet another forced displacement record had been broken in 2022. If the problems caused by ongoing conflicts, violence, persecution and the adverse effects of climate change were not solved and the risks of new ones were not

addressed, the twenty-first century would see the pace and scale of displacement far outstripping durable solutions for persons of concern to UNHCR. The emergency in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover in 2021 had come at a time when the humanitarian system was already under extreme pressure.

8. In 2022 global human suffering had worsened partly as a result of the most disruptive international armed conflict since the Second World War, a war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine that had led to the forcible displacement of nearly 14 million Ukrainians. Iceland was still committed to welcoming Afghans in need of international protection and to supporting their family reunification but, like other countries in Europe, it had also opened its doors to asylum-seekers fleeing the war in Ukraine. Since the beginning of 2022, new resources had been mobilized for internally displaced persons in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees seeking protection in neighbouring countries. Iceland would continue to share the responsibility for providing durable resettlement solutions and it would continue to work in close partnership with UNHCR to honour its commitments in that respect. The second Global Refugee Forum would offer an opportunity to donor countries to take a closer look at how better to share the responsibilities with larger refugee host countries.

9. Iceland was determined to strengthen its valuable partnership with UNHCR, because it was convinced that predictable and flexible annual funding was the most cost-effective, humane and logical way forward in a dire humanitarian landscape characterized by life-threatening shortfalls in funding, including that for persons of concern. Iceland was committed to helping bridge the funding gap in 2022 by supplying additional unearmarked resources and it encouraged other donors to do likewise, before it was too late. It would continue to provide multi-year funding for the operations of UNHCR, including those in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. In 2022 Iceland had responded to the deteriorating situation in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, and the floods in Pakistan.

10. The impact of forced displacement and statelessness differed depending on a person's age or gender. An intersectional approach was therefore needed to identify protection risks and design an effective response. Iceland therefore commended UNHCR for its exemplary work and commitment to persons in the most vulnerable situations.

11. **Mr. Nguema Mbengono** (Observer for Equatorial Guinea) said that his country hosted persons from various African States, many of whom had fled their home countries clandestinely. His Government considered that refugees were persons who were fleeing from conflict and persecution. As their status and protection was defined by international law, they must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and liberty were at risk. However, it was necessary to distinguish between refugees and migrants in an irregular situation who were seeking a better life.

12. The protection of refugees was a global challenge. Leaders all over the world must make saving lives a priority. No one should die because they had crossed a border or been forced to embark on perilous journeys in search of safety from war, conflict, persecution or hunger. It was therefore necessary to combat the root causes of those scourges in countries of origin by establishing development programmes that sought to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by creating jobs and eliminating poverty.

13. In his capacity of champion of the African Union's theme for 2019, "Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa", the President of Equatorial Guinea had visited refugee camps in Uganda and in Ethiopia where he had offered \$50,000 to assist the construction of a school for refugee children. The Government Equatorial Guinea was committed to working with UNHCR to support its programmes.

14. **Mr. Andisha** (Afghanistan) said that he wished to express his gratitude to the High Commissioner for his continued support to the people of Afghanistan and to the Member States, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye and Tajikistan, for the protection that they had provided for citizens of Afghanistan who needed humanitarian assistance and protection more than ever before. After the military takeover by the Taliban, living conditions had deteriorated and, with the approach of winter, would become even worse for millions of vulnerable persons all over the country. The provision of humanitarian

assistance was therefore vital, but it must be delivered directly through a human-rights-based, efficient mechanism, without interference by the Taliban.

15. Although in the south of the country persons who had been internally displaced by the conflict might possibly be able to return on a permanent basis and be reintegrated, in the north the Taliban were fuelling ethnic tension by forcibly displacing Tajik and Uzbek communities, in violation of their basic human rights. Furthermore, since 2021, thousands of Afghans associated with the former Government had been killed, tortured or disappeared. The Taliban were also depriving women and girls of their basic right to education and work.

16. According to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, seeking asylum was a human right. There was no such thing as a good or a bad refugee, or a real or a fake refugee. There were just refugees who needed to be protected in accordance with international law. However, in some countries, refugees were divided into good and bad refugees. Some Afghans who were fleeing persecution, torture and extrajudicial killing by the Taliban and their terrorist affiliates had been waiting for months or years to be given refugee status and basic social protection. There were many cases of Afghans who had been arrested, deported or disappeared as soon as they arrived at the border with another country of the region and whose fate was unknown.

17. He was grateful to UNHCR for its work and to all the countries that had opened their doors to citizens of Afghanistan who were the best and brightest of the country's society and who, it was to be hoped, might one day return to rebuild a free Afghanistan.

18. **Ms. Duncan Villalobos** (Costa Rica) said that war, growing political instability, the undermining of democratic government and the gathering pace of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms to the detriment of human dignity were matters of great concern. The devastating repercussions of climate change and the loss of biodiversity were additional factors triggering the displacement of persons. Displaced persons were not only extremely vulnerable to organized crime and gender-based violence, they also faced racism and racial discrimination.

19. The countries of transit and of destination of displaced persons were facing huge challenges and great uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic followed by the economic crisis and rising inflation were testing their institutional capacity to meet the needs of asylum-seekers and refugees. They needed help.

20. Costa Rica was a case in point. Currently 4 per cent of its population were covered by the protection system and 200,000 applications for asylum had been lodged. The deteriorating political situation in Nicaragua and elsewhere in the region meant that more and more people were entering the county. Despite its limited finances and resources, Costa Rica had developed policies to protect refugees and asylum-seekers, including those aimed at reducing poverty, and had given work permits to persons whose applications for asylum had been rejected but who could not return to their countries of origin, while their children received free education on an equal footing with Costa Rican children. The renewed agreement between UNHCR and the Costa Rican Social Security Fund gave more than 13,000 asylum-seekers and refugees access to health care. National institutions had endeavoured to identify priority areas where support was needed in order to provide comprehensive care for displaced persons in remote areas. The integration of refugees and asylum-seekers was fostered through employment opportunities, vocational training and measures to encourage entrepreneurship.

21. The international response to the crisis, which had forced millions of persons to flee their home countries, called for concerted efforts, including by international financial institutions, to enable host countries and countries of transit to give the necessary backing to local communities which were receiving the largest number of needy refugees and migrants. The solidarity they were showing would foster peaceful coexistence and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. She therefore called for closer cooperation and more development aid to meet shared challenges. Global problems required a global solution and the challenges arising from the forced displacement of millions of persons needed transnational responses. To that end, Costa Rica had renewed its agreement with the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and was grateful for the constant support of the other participant countries and organizations. It was through joint

action and active multilateralism that the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees and the 2030 Agenda could be achieved.

22. **Mr. Markotić** (Croatia) said that the millions of persons who had been forced to flee from their homes to escape violence, conflict, persecution, human rights violations, natural hazards and the consequences of climate change accounted for 1 per cent of the world's population. Only 13 countries had a population of over 100 million. Joint action was needed to address the causes of displacement, as humanitarian assistance was no more than first aid. Rapidly increasing global humanitarian needs were a matter of deep concern. Action to meet them should focus on securing a livelihood and the dignity of the persons concerned to ensure that no one was left behind. Hence it was necessary to tackle the root causes of humanitarian emergencies and to promote long-term solutions.

23. As the provision of care in the areas of mental health and sexual and reproductive health was still a challenge in many parts of the world, the Executive Committee conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support was extremely relevant. Mental trauma caused by war took a long time to heal. It was hoped that the best practices that Croatia had developed through its extensive experience in treating such distress might serve as guidance for other States. Croatia also paid particular attention to the inclusion of forcibly displaced children in its national education system.

24. The unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine had forced millions of persons to flee in search of safety and protection. Most of them remained in neighbouring countries. Croatia had received well over 21,000 Ukrainians, 85 per cent of whom were vulnerable women and children. They had all received temporary protection and were entitled to accommodation, education and health care. The assistance rendered to them amounted to a total of €9.6 million. However, the same level of solidarity and compassion must be shown to persons displaced by the wide variety of other crises caused by protracted conflicts. Most of their victims sought refuge in neighbouring countries which then bore the brunt of caring for them. As burden-sharing should be the norm, Croatia had helped to build five playgrounds with access for children with disabilities in two refugee camps in Jordan. In cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) it was running a project to teach 110 Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese women refugees information and communications technology skills to make it easier to find employment on the local labour market and thereby enhance their economic empowerment and change the perception of women's role in society.

25. **Mr. Honsei** (Japan) said that his Government was deeply concerned by the fact that more than 100 million persons had been forcibly displaced owing to conflict, violence, human rights abuses and persecution. The aggression against Ukraine by Russia had triggered not only a huge refugee crisis but also a global food and energy crisis. Japan could not condone any attempts to change the status quo unilaterally by force and strongly urged Russia to end the aggression immediately. Climate change figured prominently among the many factors that could produce a surge in the number of refugees and internally displaced persons. It was therefore incumbent upon the international community to increase its support for refugees before the dire humanitarian situation became even worse.

26. Japan had co-hosted the eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in August 2022. On that occasion, it had been announced that Japan was planning to provide coordinated humanitarian assistance and development aid to 1.5 million refugees and displaced persons and their host communities in Africa. Japan would like to step up its cooperation with UNHCR in that regard. It had also widened the circle of countries from which it accepted refugees and asylum-seekers to include Afghanistan and Ukraine. It was giving nearly 2,000 Ukrainians temporary protection.

27. While Japan was deeply concerned by the widening funding gap for UNHCR activities, the expansion of partnerships with the private sector was a positive development. He therefore appreciated the efforts of UNHCR to promote such partnerships. He likewise appreciated the steps taken by UNHCR to increase organizational efficiency and reduce its operational costs.

28. Japan was committed to sharing the burden and the responsibility for supporting refugees and affected populations and was therefore pleased to be a co-convenor of the

second Global Refugee Forum in 2023. It stood ready to contribute to making the forum an important milestone in tackling the challenges of forced displacement.

29. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he commended Jordan for the hospitality that it had extended for many years to successive waves of refugees. However, the protection offered by Jordan should not be taken for granted. Jordan required more help. He shared the concern that fewer resources might be available for that purpose. It was remarkable that, in Iraq, so many efforts were being made to end internal displacement, notwithstanding the residual challenges. The endeavours by Iraq to reintegrate displaced persons in their communities and to rebuild areas that had been affected by the conflict were noteworthy. He agreed with the representative of Equatorial Guinea that refugee status had to be determined in accordance with a legal definition. The efforts of the Government of that country to integrate refugees were commendable. More determined efforts were required to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo to contend with the displacement of Congolese who were abroad, the displacement of persons in the east of the country and the number of refugees it was hosting. While the lack of security in the east of the country made it difficult to reach out to persons who were in danger, his Office always stood ready to facilitate the sustainable return of displaced persons. He had taken note of the comments regarding the use of resources and the choice of partners and he, too, was concerned about possible imbalances in the allocation of resources. He thanked Paraguay for its response to the flows in its region and for its multilateral spirit. He was grateful to the representative of Costa Rica for mentioning persons in such movements were vulnerable and faced racism and racial discrimination. Constant attempts must be made to eliminate those risks. Although Costa Rica was both a host country and a country of transit, but it pursued very inclusive policies and did all it could to offer high-quality reception services. He thanked Iceland for its much-appreciated ongoing commitment, its support with resettlement and for setting an example by pledging additional unearmarked resources. He was grateful to Croatia for highlighting the importance of the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support and for offering to make its expertise available. Disaster preparedness was likewise crucial. That was why unearmarked funding, which could be tapped quickly in the event of an emergency, was so important. He wished to reassure the representative of Afghanistan that UNHCR would continue to assist the Afghan people, despite the shortfall in development funding. He thanked the neighbouring countries for hosting Afghan refugees and also appealed to States not to discriminate against refugees from some countries. He thanked Japan for increasing its government contributions and extending temporary protection to refugees from far afield. He was delighted that Japan was a co-convenor of the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum.

30. **Ms. Schweitzer** (Austria) said that 2022 had clearly been another year of mounting challenges for UNHCR with respect to providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons. Sadly, the number of forcibly displaced persons had reached a record 100 million. Her Government was very grateful to the High Commissioner and his Office for their unflagging efforts to help and protect millions of persons who would otherwise have been deprived of a safe and dignified life. Serious human rights violations, political oppression, civil strife, armed conflict and war were uprooting millions of people, forcing them to leave their homes, separating them from their loved ones and stripping them of all means of earning a living. Political solutions for almost all protracted displacement situations were more remote than ever before.

31. Austria strongly condemned the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression committed by Russia against Ukraine. It considered the country's illegal attempts to annex Ukrainian territory null and void. It called upon Russia to immediately cease military actions, withdraw all troops from Ukraine and fully respect its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders. It also called on all parties to the conflict, in particular the Russian Federation, to abide strictly by their obligation to respect and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law in all circumstances and to honour their obligation to grant full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and guarantee the safety of humanitarian corridors.

32. Austria expressed its full solidarity with Ukraine. It accepted its responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the displaced people from Ukraine and offer them sanctuary. That

applied in particular to vulnerable persons, such as women, children, sick persons and persons with disabilities. Since the beginning of the war, more than 440,000 displaced persons from Ukraine had entered Austria, of whom more than 81,000 had chosen to remain and be registered in the country. Austria had also helped to evacuate orphans, care workers and the children in their care. It had undertaken to accept 2,000 displaced persons from Moldova as well as 500 displaced persons from Poland to Austria in order to relieve the burden on them. Furthermore, Austria has contributed €3.5 million to the operations of UNHCR in Ukraine.

33. The war in Europe had not, however, made her Government blind to humanitarian crises and displacement situations in other regions of the world. One welcome development was that, after two decades, Côte d'Ivoire had peacefully resolved its conflict, thereby enabling more than 310,000 Ivorian refugees to return home voluntarily. In 2022, Austria had provided funding for the operations of UNHCR in the Niger, Libya, Tunisia and Afghanistan the neighbouring countries that were hosting Afghan refugees, in particular the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Developing countries hosted the vast majority of refugees and her Government was grateful for their solidarity and generosity. Austria's financial contributions to UNHCR amounted to a total \$17.8 million.

34. Austria was pleased that gender equality was central to the action of UNHCR. It therefore commended it for the priority it gave to measures to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and ensure their access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. It appreciated the Office's efforts to make sure that displaced and stateless children and young persons could receive schooling, along with its targeted support to refugee children with disabilities who were at a greater risk of dropping out of school because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

35. Her Government fully approved of the work being done by UNHCR to protect forcibly displaced and stateless LGBTIQ+ persons and was deeply concerned that some States refused or were unable to protect them from violence and abuse. As a party to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and a member of the Friends of the I Belong Campaign to End Statelessness, Austria was in favour of all endeavours to end statelessness. It fully supported the adoption of the Executive Committee conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support.

36. In 2022, Austria had processed the second highest number of asylum applications and accepted the second highest number of refugees per capita in the whole of the European Union. It had already granted asylum to almost 8,000 refugees, subsidiary protection to more than 11,000 persons and leave to remain on humanitarian grounds to more than 12,000 persons.

37. **Mr. Mac Aodha** (Ireland) said that his Government fully supported the High Commissioner and his team. Throughout its term as a member of the Security Council, Ireland had consistently taken a strong principled stance rooted in the principles of building peace, strengthening prevention and ensuring accountability.

38. At the beginning of 2022, all States were already facing sizeable challenges owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and many complex crises all over the world. The unprovoked and unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine had had not only a direct and devastating impact on Ukraine but also reverberations on global supplies, and it had increased the cost of food and fuel worldwide.

39. People who were forced to flee their homes were worst affected by those additional shocks. There was a danger that the staggering figure of over 100 million displaced persons might obscure the stark reality that what was at stake were the lives of individuals that had been jeopardized by circumstances beyond their control. The overwhelming majority of people who were fleeing conflict or other crises stayed as close to home as possible and remained in neighbouring countries, most of which were developing countries. States had an obligation to help host countries whenever necessary. Host countries should not suffer for their generosity. It was also necessary to provide pathways for refugees to move on, either through safe and voluntary return, or through resettlement.

40. Ireland was determined to be part of the requisite response. Its funding for UNHCR was growing and its core funding for UNHCR was higher than it had ever been. Over two thirds of that funding was either unearmarked or softly earmarked. Ireland intended to continue to work in partnership with UNHCR to ensure improvements in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in line with its commitments under the Grand Bargain. It had provided funding for the work of UNHCR in specific crises such as those in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Uganda and Jordan. Its prompt assistance to Ukraine had come from additional rather than existing resources.

41. Humanitarian workers in conflict-affected contexts had been targeted, abducted and killed in the course of their work. There could be no impunity for parties to armed conflict that targeted humanitarian actors and used starvation and denial of access to humanitarian assistance as weapons against civilians. There must be accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. Ireland saluted UNHCR staff who sought to protect displaced persons in very dangerous situations.

42. **Ms. Haque** (Bangladesh) said that the worsening refugee situation was a matter of deep concern. The developing countries were bearing the brunt of the burden of the global refugee crisis. The protracted refugee situation was seriously hampering host countries' progress towards development and prosperity. In that situation, enhanced international cooperation and assistance to refugees, forcibly displaced persons and their host communities was an absolute necessity. A robust display of global solidarity and strict adherence to the principle of burden-sharing were vital.

43. The vulnerability of refugees, forcibly displaced people and their host communities, which had been brought to light by the COVID-19 pandemic, had been exacerbated by the emergence of new conflicts and a food and fuel crisis. For that reason, it was necessary to search for durable solutions, as they were the only way forward. Greater efforts had to be made to address the root causes of the situation and create an environment in countries of origin that was conducive to safe, orderly and voluntary return. It was therefore disappointing that durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons were the least important issue in the Office's programme of work, yet it was essential that UNHCR played an effective role in finding such solutions, in particular through voluntary repatriation.

44. Bangladesh was hosting over a million forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar and was providing them with the necessary humanitarian assistance, despite many challenges and resource constraints and at a time when almost every nation of the world was facing an economic downturn. Educational programmes were being run in the Rohingyas' native language, along with various capacity-building projects. The Government had built spacious camps with modern facilities in the district of Noakhali to accommodate around 100,000 Rohingyas. Some 30,000 of them had willingly moved to that area. Bangladesh valued its collaboration with UNHCR and the international community on the Rohingya issue, but it was extremely concerned about the shortfall in funding for the joint response plan for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, as that obviously placed an additional burden on the host country.

45. The prolonged stay of the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar had already endangered the social, environmental, economic, ecological and security situation in the region. The alarming rise in crime, including drug and illegal human trafficking, among the Rohingyas was endangering regional stability. The Rohingya crisis had been created by Myanmar and it was up to Myanmar to resolve it. As the High Commissioner had rightly pointed out, a country of origin was responsible for creating an environment conducive to safe, orderly and voluntary repatriation. Bangladesh had done everything possible to resolve the crisis through engagement with Myanmar and other relevant countries. However, owing to Myanmar's blatant non-compliance with bilateral agreements and its flagrant breach of its international commitments, not a single Rohingya had been able to return to Myanmar in the previous five years. Sadly, the Rohingya issue had become a victim of the ongoing political turmoil in Myanmar. The international community seemed to have shifted its attention from the Rohingya crisis to the current political crisis in Myanmar. That approach would derail efforts to ensure justice for that community. The international community should play a proactive role and take meaningful action to guarantee the safe, voluntary and dignified return of the

Rohingya from Bangladesh to Myanmar. Her Government also urged UNHCR to step up its activities in Rakhine State in order to create a favourable environment for repatriation.

46. Her Government called on the High Commissioner to eliminate the chronic imbalances in geographical representation at different professional levels in UNHCR by recruiting more international staff from underrepresented countries. Her delegation would participate actively in the Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

47. **Mr. Ayala** (Colombia) said that his Government accepted the invitation to become one of the organizers of the Global Refugee Forum, which would offer refugees an opportunity to be heard. He congratulated those delegations that had included a refugee and would recommend that his Government did likewise in the future. Latin America was facing new challenges that could be solved only through international cooperation. His Government was striving to implement the public policies agreed in the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection and hoped that it could count on the international community's backing for the International Donors' Conference in Solidarity with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in 2023. States shared the responsibility for granting refugee status to persons who needed it. At the same time, it was necessary to foster their socioeconomic integration, build the capacity of host communities and seek durable solutions. It was therefore vital to promote a holistic, human rights-based approach if refugees' rights were to be safeguarded effectively. Human rights did not cease to exist when a person left his or her country of origin. The multiple, intersectional forms of discrimination against migrants and refugees were therefore unacceptable. Treating them as criminals was a breach of human rights. The detention of migrants was intolerable. The best interests of children who crossed border must always be a priority.

48. In recent years, Colombia had become one of the countries that received the largest number of refugees and migrants in transit, although it had been unprepared for that role. Rather than seeing it as a problem or a security threat, it had regarded migration as an opportunity and an investment in a better future for both the host communities and the migrants. With the support of UNHCR, it had therefore granted temporary protection to 1.4 million Venezuelans, thereby regularizing their status and safeguarding their rights. The question then arose of how best to guarantee the exercise of those rights. The restoration of diplomatic and consular relations between Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the reopening of the border would be of great benefit to the population on either side of the border and would ease the passage from one country to the other. His Government hoped that it could count on the further support from UNHCR in dealing expeditiously with asylum applications. It was fully committed to giving effect to the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees adopted in 1984 and it invited other countries in the region to apply wider, more flexible criteria when granting the right of asylum. Colombia guaranteed the right of asylum.

49. The growing number of migrants and refugees who were crossing the Darién Gap was worrying. In 2022 alone, 151,000 persons had attempted to cross one of the most inhospitable forests on the planet. Pregnant women, children and older persons had embarked on the perilous journey through the jungle. He called on the international community and UNHCR to cooperate more closely with Colombia in speeding up the exchange of information between countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent migrants being tricked into entering the Darién region in an attempt to reach North America.

50. **Mr. Jgenti** (Georgia) said that his Government condemned the indiscriminate bombings of civilians in Ukraine by Russia and welcomed the work of UNHCR to alleviate the plight of the more than 18 million forcibly displaced Ukrainians and States' efforts to welcome them. Georgia was supporting more than 28,000 Ukrainians, which included the 2,100 Ukrainian children enrolled in its schools. His Government ensured an efficient asylum procedure and provided socioeconomic assistance to persons of concern, and it valued highly the contribution of UNHCR to meeting the humanitarian needs of persons affected by conflict, including its assistance in improving the Georgian asylum system and creating effective refugee policies. Georgia had strengthened its legislative and institutional frameworks and complied fully with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and work was under way to align its asylum legislation with that of the European Union. Since 2012, Georgia had granted international

protection to more than 2,000 asylum-seekers, and it provided vocational training to refugees and persons admitted on humanitarian grounds, or humanitarian status holders.

51. The ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Russian Federation in parts of Georgia had forced more than half a million Georgians from their homes; they had yet to return, and the destruction that the Russian Federation continued to wreak in occupied areas put many persons at risk of internal displacement. The European Court of Human Rights had ruled that Russia had violated international law, including the right of internally displaced persons and refugees to return home, and had concluded that Russia was obliged to enable persons of Georgian origin to return. That judgment was supported by the decision of the International Criminal Court to issue warrants for the arrest of persons with criminal responsibility for the war crimes committed during the 2008 war between Georgia and the Russian Federation. The Geneva International Discussions were therefore particularly important, and UNHCR played a vital role in the working group that discussed humanitarian matters as part of that process. Furthermore, the annual resolution of the General Assembly on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali recognized their right to return home, and his Government would prioritize their socioeconomic integration until that right was realized.

52. **Mr. Dávalos** (Ecuador) said that his Government shared the concerns at the growing number of persons forcibly displaced because of serious humanitarian crises. The international community must adopt measures to address the inequality and vulnerability exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure the safety, rights and dignity of refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless and internally displaced persons. Those challenges and the prolonged nature of many refugee crises meant that responsibility-sharing and solidarity among States must be strengthened, with sufficient, predictable support given to host countries so that protection, assistance and solutions could be managed more effectively and equitably. It was vital that UNHCR supported States through innovative, multidimensional and inclusive responses that prioritized durable solutions and considered the needs of host communities. In turn, Member States must support UNHCR through increased funding and strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors, civil society, academia and other actors.

53. Ecuador benefited from the support of UNHCR in fulfilling its international protection obligations. There were currently a record 74,000 refugees in the country, most of whom were Colombians, along with 502,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees, who enjoyed free access to basic services and of whom 220,000 had regular migration status. The regularization process was supported by a strategy that promoted socioeconomic inclusion and job creation, along with measures to tackle discrimination and xenophobia. The Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela had enabled UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to respond to the crisis; those efforts required the clear, predictable support of the international community. Moreover, Ecuador had promoted the search for solutions through the Quito Process on the Human Mobility of Venezuelan Nationals in the Region. Its commitment to progress in the areas of protection and durable solutions must be complemented by international cooperation and solidarity with refugees, migrants and host communities, in line with the principle of shared responsibility.

54. **Ms. Galea** (Malta) said that the refugee crisis sparked by the war in Ukraine would only be resolved in the long term if the Russian Federation ended hostilities and withdrew its armed forces to within its internationally recognized borders. Her Government condemned in the strongest terms the bombing of civilians and civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. The situation in Afghanistan also required immediate attention; the disregard for human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls, by the group in control of the country constituted a major push factor. Afghan nationals comprised the largest group of asylum-seekers in the European Union and associated countries. Furthermore, the situation in the Central Mediterranean remained precarious, with instability in countries such as Libya increasing refugee numbers significantly. As a result, Malta, a small country, faced substantial challenges in dealing with the more than 600 asylum applications that had been received to date.

55. Malta was a strong advocate of systems that enforced burden- and responsibility-sharing and the establishment of a predictable relocation mechanism, and it welcomed the relocation assistance provided by some Member States. It continued to engage with its European Union partners on the New Pact on Asylum and Migration to ensure a balance between solidarity and responsibility in managing migration flows. Her Government had made progress in implementing its pledges on migrant integration made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, including through the I Belong Programme, which provided culture and language classes, and the “Turning the Tables” initiative, which allowed refugees to develop policy proposals.

56. **Mr. Hovhannisyan** (Armenia) said that Armenia hosted tens of thousands of persons of concern. Persons displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and Syrian refugees had been joined in 2022 by persons from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, along with several thousand persons recently displaced following the unjustified attack by Azerbaijan on Armenian territory. His Government worked closely with UNHCR to address those challenges, and an extensive restructuring of the refugee system, planned with the help of the European Union, aimed to strengthen the country’s asylum and migration management capacities and modernize its legislative and regulatory framework. Institutional reforms were also ongoing, including the digitization and simplification of the migration management system.

57. The establishment of a UNHCR field unit in southern Armenia would assist tens of thousands of persons forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, although the Azerbaijani Government continued to prevent UNHCR from working with displaced ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh under politically motivated pretexts. The access to Nagorno-Karabakh granted to UNHCR in accordance with paragraph 7 of the trilateral statement on the ceasefire of 9 November 2020 must be based on humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence and avoid discrimination and the undermining of human rights. It was regrettable that the representative of Azerbaijan had politicized the Executive Committee meetings by, once again, glorifying the war. The Armenian Government refuted the gross exaggerations and distortions voiced by the Azerbaijani representative, including with regard to the planting of mines in Nagorno-Karabakh; in fact, as acknowledged by high-ranking Azerbaijani officials, his Government had provided all the information relating to minefields that was in its possession, and the International Court of Justice had concluded that Azerbaijan had failed to provide evidence of the alleged conduct of Armenia with regard to landmines. The Azerbaijani representative’s assertions had been intended to mislead the international community and the Azerbaijani public to conceal the Azerbaijani Government’s own failings.

58. **Ms. Werdaningtyas** (Observer for Indonesia) said that in the light of increasingly complex humanitarian situations, conflict, climate disasters and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the humanitarian response, which together had caused record levels of forced displacement, she wished to highlight three key points. Firstly, the principles of humanity and non-refoulement must be upheld. While the pushback policies employed by several countries violated the right to life, Indonesia exceeded its obligations, rescuing almost 700 refugees from boats between 2020 and 2022. Joint effort must be made to ensure that refugees did not resort to dangerous sea migration routes and to safeguard them from inhumane treatment and exploitation. Her Government worked closely with UNHCR and IOM to cover the basic needs of around 13,000 refugees currently in transit across Indonesia and cooperated with regional mechanisms such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

59. Secondly, the importance of burden- and responsibility-sharing must be recognized. Most refugees were hosted in developing countries, and more than a quarter were granted asylum in the least developed countries. In the face of such imbalance, the relevant principles of the Global Compact on Refugees must continue to be put into practice, and parties to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees must honour their commitments and obligations. Lastly, Indonesia worked with UNHCR to find durable solutions, including swift repatriation and resettlement processes. Her Government hoped that traditional resettlement countries would continue to consider positively applications for resettlement, despite recent influxes of refugees. Her Government provided equal assistance for refugees around the world, including refugees displaced by

protracted conflicts. It would therefore support UNHCR in broadening its donor base to lessen the burden on host countries. Ultimately, the cycle of displacement would be broken by sustained peace and safety.

60. **Ms. Erçelik Vandeweyer** (Türkiye) said that Türkiye stood at the crossroads of large movements of asylum-seekers and refugees from many backgrounds, whom her Government supported generously. For almost a decade, it had hosted more refugees than any other country; more than 4 million in total. Most of those refugees were Syrians, who received health, education and other services. Her Government also provided security and humanitarian support to 5 million persons across the border with the Syrian Arab Republic who faced harsh conditions and had been forgotten by the international community. Furthermore, Türkiye had welcomed almost 500,000 Ukrainians displaced by the war there, providing humanitarian assistance and shelter to them inside and outside its territory. It would continue its diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the conflict. Nevertheless, the situation in Ukraine should not detract from support and funding for the response to the crisis in Afghanistan; sustained, limited engagement with the group in control of that country was vital to address humanitarian concerns and prevent new irregular migration flows.

61. The developments in her region necessitated close and effective cooperation on migration, including fair and equitable burden-sharing. The externalization of asylum processes, pushbacks and shifting of international responsibilities to third countries risked the lives of thousands of innocent persons and were therefore unacceptable. In particular, the European Union must act to prevent pushbacks on land and at sea by the Greek authorities, cease the involvement of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in such actions and hold the perpetrators to account. The safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees was an important durable solution, and most Syrians would be willing to return home once they considered their country safe; indeed, more than 500,000 had already returned to opposition-held areas. Her Government would work to make the necessary political progress in that regard, and political and financial support from other sources were required. The international community must also play its part by increasing resettlement quotas.

62. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), welcoming the granting of temporary protection by the Colombian Government, said that work must be done within the framework of the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection to broaden the possible solutions to forced displacement in the Americas. The re-establishment of diplomatic and consular relations between Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would benefit refugees and migrants. He also welcomed the extension of the services provided to the many Venezuelan refugees and migrants regularized in Ecuador. UNHCR must continue to mobilize international resources to support the efforts of Colombia, Ecuador and other countries in the region.

63. The work undertaken by Ireland within the Security Council to promote the needs of vulnerable groups was welcome, as were its increased contributions to UNHCR and its highlighting of the importance of preventing violations of international humanitarian law and protecting humanitarian personnel. The effort made by the Austrian Government to receive refugees from Ukraine was commendable. Given the lack of funding, there was a risk that the progress made in refugee education would be lost. While the very high number of asylum applications received by the Austrian Government owed in part to the country's geographical location, it was also testament to the effectiveness of its system, and the Government should continue its efforts in that regard.

64. He agreed with the representative of Malta that a balance must be struck between solidarity and responsibility in the reception of asylum-seekers and others in search of protection. He hoped that a resolution would be found during the current complex debate on the matter in Europe, a region that had already demonstrated its ability to manage large flows. UNHCR would continue to participate in the Geneva International Discussions and to assist Georgia in increasing its capacity to manage refugee flows. The Office provided similar assistance to Armenia, and while it stood ready to fulfil its role under paragraph 7 of the trilateral statement on the ceasefire of 9 November 2020, the parties concerned must agree on the modalities.

65. The welcome afforded by Bangladesh to Rohingya refugees, despite the very difficult situation, was commendable. UNHCR would continue to work in Myanmar to create the conditions necessary for their return. He shared the concerns expressed by the representative of Bangladesh regarding the underfunding of the joint response plan for the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. While solutions represented a very important part of the Office's efforts concerning the Rohingya, they were the most difficult outcome to reach. The Indonesian Government should continue its work on rescue and disembarkation and under the Bali Process, in which UNHCR would continue to play its part in the hope that greater attention would be paid to refugee protection. He noted the appeal by the Indonesian representative for increased resettlement of refugees.

66. **Ms. Mambetova** (Observer for Kyrgyzstan) said that, with the assistance of UNHCR, significant achievements had been made since her country's accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The Government of Tajikistan, however, had violated the right to life during its recent unprovoked aggression against Kyrgyzstan, despite existing peace agreements and the two countries' shared history and culture. Attacks had been carried out against civilians and civilian infrastructure, causing many to lose their lives and many more to become injured or displaced. The assistance provided so far by United Nations agencies and other international partners was welcome, and she urged the international community to lend further support to address the worsening situation and help rebuild. The assistance of UNHCR and the international community was also required to assist the many ethnic Kyrgyz who had been expelled from Tajikistan during the conflict on grounds of their ethnicity, rendering them refugees. Tajikistan must cease its persecution of that group.

67. **Mr. Ben Cheikh** (Tunisia) said that his Government was grateful to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his efforts to alleviate the suffering of refugees and to mobilize international aid for their long-term protection. The huge number of displaced persons and asylum-seekers throughout the world revealed the full scale of the challenges currently facing the international community in its search for durable solutions and sufficient funds and resources to cover the needs of all refugees and internally displaced persons. His delegation was satisfied with the measures taken under the Global Compact on Refugees. However, it drew attention for the need for burden-sharing and, in that context, it called on civil society organizations and States to redouble their efforts to support repatriation, to shoulder their collective responsibility for finding durable solutions and to display sufficient solidarity. Humanitarian assistance and development aid should go hand in hand in order to meet the longer term social, environmental and health challenges confronting transit countries.

68. Tunisia was committed to implementing the provisions of international human rights treaties and international humanitarian law. It would therefore spare no efforts to create the necessary conditions for hosting refugees. Its membership of the Security Council during the period 2020–2012 had enabled Tunisia to put forward a number of initiatives to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the measures it had taken in that respect had been to extend leave to remain for the most vulnerable foreign residents and other vulnerable groups. It was doing all it could to integrate refugees and asylum-seekers into its social protection system. Refugees' rights had been embodied in new chapters of the Constitution.

69. **Mr. Loum** (Senegal) said that conflicts and economic instability meant that the population of many countries all over the world were facing almost insurmountable challenges. In addition, global warming, health threats and insecurity were forcing persons to be displaced or to flee their country, sometimes at risk to life and limb. It was therefore more necessary than ever before to join together in an attempt to calm tensions and resolve conflicts, to solve worldwide health issues, to reduce persistent inequalities and to restore meaning to multilateralism. That approach would enable persons who wished to remain in their home country to live there in complete safety, but it would also help internally displaced persons and refugees to lead a healthy, peaceful life and to be well integrated. That was why Senegal had a strategy for integrating refugees, asylum-seekers, repatriated persons and persons at risk of statelessness that granted them all their basic rights and included them in the implementation of the Plan for an Emerging Senegal. A high-level workshop had been held in 2021 to draw up a national action plan to eliminate statelessness in accordance with

the undertakings which the Government had given at the high-level segment on stateless in 2019. In addition, Act No. 2022-01 on the status of refugees and stateless persons had introduced a legal and institutional framework to provide such persons with real protection. The National Commission for the Management of Refugees and Stateless Persons had been set up for that purpose. The new law upheld the right to family reunification if one family member had already obtained asylum. A person with refugee status or a stateless person was entitled to acquire Senegalese nationality subject to the conditions laid down by law and had the same rights as nationals to obtain medical treatment under universal health insurance, to freedom of worship, to access to justice, including through legal aid, and to basic social services. At the end of 2021, an awareness-raising campaign mounted jointly with UNHCR had led to almost 12,000 asylum-seekers being registered for a refugee identity card. The Government was currently preparing measures to modernize the recording of refugees' personal data and to sign an agreement on refugees' travel documents. The principle of non-refoulement was duly respected by the Senegalese authorities in accordance with domestic law and the international agreements and conventions signed by his country.

70. **Ms. Atteya** (Egypt) said that her Government was deeply concerned about the increasing number of refugees and other persons of concern who had been driven from their homes in various parts of the world by humanitarian crises caused by conflicts or the effects of climate change. Egypt was hosting more than 283,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers, most of whom came from areas of protracted crisis. Egypt's policy on refugees and asylum-seekers was guided by three main principles, namely upholding human rights, adopting a single approach to refugee issues and leaving no one behind. Despite the heavy toll of the COVID-19 pandemic and a variety of complex economic challenges, her Government had continued to include refugees in all national responses to the dire effects of those situations and had introduced innovative mechanisms to improve their protection. For example, one aim of the Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees was to expand partnership between the Egyptian Government and United Nations agencies as a means of bridging the gap between resources and displaced persons' needs. Another aim was to mobilize international support and to channel it towards the priority requirements of migrants, refugees and host communities. The Platform rested on the principle of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing and adopted a multi-stakeholder approach that focused on the human rights and protection needs of refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities. However, in view of persistent underfunding and the increasing responsibilities shouldered by host countries, Egypt called on the international community to guarantee international support that matched the generosity shown by countries hosting refugees and to align its assistance on national development efforts to enhance resilience and ensure long-term solutions for refugees and host communities. She encouraged States and partners to endorse the Joint Platform's future activities.

71. Ongoing conflict and challenging humanitarian situations were a matter of concern since they were likely to increase refugees flows and mixed movements in the region. It was therefore essential to get to grips with the root causes of displacement and create enabling environments for voluntary return. Egypt hosted the African Union Centre for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development which was seeking to support regional efforts to maintain peace and stability as a means of addressing the refugee crisis in a comprehensive manner. It also organized the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development which was trying to shift the focus from managing situations of forced displacement to preventing them. In recognition of the fact that worsening water scarcity and environmental degradation forced people to move, the Egyptian presidency of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change would advocate engagement with other United Nations bodies concerned with global climate change and would press for a more concerted international effort to tackle the adverse effects of global warming, increase resilience and focus on prevention.

72. It was vital to scale up efforts to achieve durable solutions for refugees, to support host communities through unearmarked assistance and to expand resettlement opportunities so as to secure durable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing.

73. **Mr. Ražnatović** (Montenegro) said that humanitarian emergencies that were unprecedented in scale and number, combined with a severe food and energy crisis, an

economic downturn and the ongoing threat of further waves of COVID-19, meant that all States must take action towards ending those scourges and preventing the emergence of new conflicts and crises, since that was a key step towards averting forced displacement. Solidarity and burden-sharing were crucial in the context of providing protection and finding solutions. As climate change and armed conflicts were interconnected with displacement, the efforts of UNHCR to take action with regard to the climate were welcome. His Government fully supported the Executive Committee conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support.

74. Europe was facing the massive displacement of Ukrainians owing to the war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. That aggression against a sovereign State and the attempts to annex part of its territory deserved unanimous condemnation in the strongest terms, as not only did they grossly violate the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but they also undermined the rules-based global order. As a result of the hostilities, more than 11 million persons had fled the country and over 6.2 had become internally displaced. Montenegro had kept its borders open to refugees from Ukraine. Around 72,000 persons had entered the country from Ukraine and 27,000 of them were currently residing in the country, about 6,600 of whom had requested international protection. At the beginning of March, the Government had decided to grant persons from Ukraine temporary protection for a period of one year and it had established a coordinating body, which included a representative of UNHCR, to implement that decision.

75. Montenegro remained committed to further improving its capacity to provide protection and find sustainable solutions together with its partners, namely UNHCR, IOM and the European Union. It had continued to strengthen its asylum system by signing a road map for cooperation for the period 2022–2023 with the European Union Agency for Asylum. It was pursuing its efforts to facilitate the regulation of refugees' status and the voluntary return of internationally displaced persons from countries of the former Yugoslavia. Montenegro was looking forward to the successful implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Montenegro was proud of the results it had achieved with regard to the elimination of statelessness.

76. His Government was grateful for the support it was receiving from the UNHCR country office in Montenegro and it welcomed the progress made with the UNHCR business transformation programme. Montenegro would do its utmost to remain a reliable partner of UNHCR and to support international efforts to protect persons of concern.

77. **Ms. Marroquin Mogollón** (Observer for Guatemala) said that her Government was committed to the promotion, protection and defence of the human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers and to all the processes set in motion in the wake of the Global Compact on Refugees. It therefore encouraged UNHCR to widen its cash assistance programme, through which, in the first half of 2022, it had been possible to meet the basic needs of more than 2,000 persons who had required protection in Guatemala. The current surge in the number of displaced persons who required international assistance was a challenge that no country could contend with on its own. The repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of natural disasters and the effects of the unjustified Russian aggression against Ukraine made the financing of international cooperation all the more necessary. Guatemala recognized that host communities were making strenuous efforts to generate decent employment opportunities and provide sustainable livelihoods in an inclusive environment. It was therefore firmly committed to participating actively in the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS). In August 2022, the National Technical Team that was helping to implement MIRPS had updated the action plan that set out priorities for Guatemala. In September 2022, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had attended the MIRPS Support Platform International Solidarity Event which had been co-hosted by Canada and the United States of America with a view to strengthening protection and promoting solutions for forcibly displaced persons and host communities in Central America and Mexico. Her Government attached great importance to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges and looked forward to the official visit of the Assistant High Commissioner for Operations at the end of October, as it would provide an opportunity to bolster the country's strategic alliance with UNHCR.

78. **Ms. Brančina** (Latvia) said that her Government shared the High Commissioner's concerns about the many challenges that faced the world. The truly devastating milestone of over 100 million forcibly displaced persons made the mandate of UNHCR more important than ever before. The largest refugee movement in Europe since the Second World War had been brought about by the unprovoked, unjustified military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Russian attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure showed a blatant disregard of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. The impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine had been felt not only in Europe but throughout the world, as the destabilization of global food markets and increasing global food insecurity could well give rise to a risk of famine in many countries. She commended the work of humanitarian agencies, including UNHCR for staying and delivering in Ukraine, stepping up their operations in neighbouring countries and striving to counter global food security. In that context, it was impossible to overestimate the importance of cash assistance in order to address specific needs in a direct, flexible manner.

79. Latvia had been supplying all possible forms of assistance to Ukrainians who had been displaced by the military invasion. It had adopted a holistic approach in which the Government, private sector, civil society and local communities all worked together to offer protection to refugees. Almost 40,000 Ukrainians who had fled the war had been officially registered in Latvia, over 12,000 of whom were children. That meant that Ukrainians made up almost 2 per cent of the whole population of Latvia. The Government and people of Latvia would continue to support Ukrainian refugees for as long as necessary. While most of those refugees yearned to return home and rebuild their country, that would not be possible as long as Russian aggression continued. Ending the senseless war was the only way to help the people of Ukraine and to stop global food insecurity. Her Government therefore called on the Russian Federation immediately to cease its use of force, unconditionally to withdraw its troops from the whole of Ukrainian territory and to end its attempts illegally to annex regions of Ukraine.

80. **Ms. Kayacik** (Observer for the Council of Europe) said that the aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation had led to the suspension of the latter's right of representation in the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. That aggression had resulted in the biggest movement of refugees in Europe since the Second World War. All Council of Europe member States had been affected, especially those neighbouring Ukraine. Volunteers, civil society organizations and municipalities in those countries had played a crucial role in providing support and showing solidarity with the refugees. The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings had issued a guidance note on how to address the risk of trafficking in human beings that was related to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis. The Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse had issued a checklist to ensure the protection of refugee children against sexual exploitation and abuse. Another checklist had been widely disseminated with the aim of protecting women and girls who were migrants, refugees or asylum-seekers against violence. Measures based on the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees had been taken to help Ukrainian refugees find opportunities for further study and work. The Council of Europe had also put in place psychological support and offered guidance on family-based care for unaccompanied children and those who had been separated from their parents. The Council of Europe Development Bank continued to provide significant support to countries that were facing a huge influx of refugees.

81. In 2022 she had carried out fact-finding visits to Slovakia, Czechia, Poland and the Republic of Moldova. Their aim had been to ensure the provision of adequate assistance to vulnerable persons in line with the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021–2025). The Council of Europe and UNHCR were organizing joint follow-up activities in the countries visited. Cooperation between the two bodies was also directed at protecting the human rights of all refugees, regardless of their country of origin. To that end, the Committee of Ministers had adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)10 on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)21 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation.

82. The European Convention on Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions constituted the basis for the work of the Council of Europe. The current refugee crisis had yet again shown that joint action made organizations stronger and more effective.

83. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the work of UNHCR in Guatemala would, of course, continue especially in order to strengthen the institutions dealing with migration flows and those providing assistance to the most vulnerable persons. He agreed that it was necessary to expand the membership of MIRPS and gain more international support for it. He was greatly concerned by the tension and conflict on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and by the rapid growth in the number of internally displaced persons. However, he believed that situation had become calmer and that some internally displaced persons had returned to their homes. The Office had increased its capacity to provide humanitarian assistance on the Kyrgyz side of the border. He thanked Kyrgyzstan for its valuable work to reduce statelessness. He likewise thanked Senegal for pointing out that it was vital to give back meaning to multilateralism and for the information about the action taken by the Government to include and integrate refugees. He had been interested to hear the approach taken by Egypt to receiving very large numbers of persons, in which its geographical position, historic role and tradition had played a very large part. The Joint Platform for Migrants and Refugees could be a very useful forum for discussing those two issues. He was grateful that, as the host country of the Conference of the Parties, Egypt would be stressing the crucial link between climate emergencies and displacement. He agreed with Tunisia about the need to find more resources, share responsibility with and provide more support for countries of transit. He had been struck by the large number of refugees being hosted in Montenegro and Latvia. The steps taken by Montenegro to work with the European Union to improve its asylum system was very important because of the mixed movements passing through its subregion. He assured Latvia that his Office would help it to cope with the large influx of Ukrainians. Plans should already be made for their repatriation at some point in the future, even if current circumstances were not conducive to an early return. The Council of Europe was a valued partner when providing support for countries that were hosting Ukrainian refugees. It was also doing very useful work to combat trafficking in women and girls. He greatly appreciated the long-standing hospitality that Türkiye had shown to refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic in particular, despite all the challenges that it encountered in securing their access to public services, education, health care and employment. He noted that it was also hosting refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan and agreed that it was necessary to pay close attention to the situation in the latter country. Given the fragile situation there, his Office was still advising persons not to return.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.