



# General Assembly

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## Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Seventy-third session

### Summary record of the 754th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 14 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Baddoura ..... (Lebanon)

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

**Consideration and adoption of the programme budget for 2023 (A/AC.96/1224 and A/AC.96/1230)**

1. **The Chair** said that the Committee had before it the proposed programme budget for 2023, contained in document [A/AC.96/1224](#). The report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on that budget ([A/AC.96/1230](#)) would also be relevant to the discussion. He recalled that the proposed programme budget had already been reviewed at an informal consultative meeting on 29 August 2022 and at the eighty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee.

2. **Mr. Tarutin** (Russian Federation) said that his Government welcomed the fact that the budget had been prepared in a spirit of active cooperation and that it clearly demonstrated the financial needs of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Had the recommendations contained in the Advisory Committee report been implemented, however, the preparation process would have been further enhanced. His Government called on UNHCR to carefully examine the recommendations and present its conclusions to the Member States, and regretted the recent practice in the Executive Committee of adopting no decisions regarding the Advisory Committee's work. Before the current session, the Russian Federation had proposed that the Executive Committee should return to its earlier practice – in line with the practice of the General Assembly – of allowing Member States to express their views on Advisory Committee recommendations, which had enabled it to fully guide the Office's activities and make full use of the Advisory Committee's expert knowledge. His Government had withdrawn the proposal in the interests of achieving a consensus but would suggest that Member States should consider the Advisory Committee's work more carefully in the future. It supported the Office's proposal to hold regular discussions, in November and March, on Advisory Committee recommendations that related to UNHCR activities. It trusted that the Office would be able to prepare a report on procurement for the forthcoming meeting of the Standing Committee, including on the implementation of the concept of sustainable procurement.

3. **Ms. Guadey** (Ethiopia) said that the severe drought in the horn of Africa had led to the displacement of millions of people, whose difficulties were compounded by the recent global surge in food and energy prices. The situation had become especially challenging in Ethiopia, one of the largest refugee-hosting countries, after refugee food rations had been reduced by 40 per cent in November 2021 and more than 50 per cent in June 2022. The 2023 budget allocations for the Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes and country operations in Ethiopia lagged far behind the needs on the ground. The annual increase in the number of persons of concern had led to a striking decline in per capita funding that seriously affected service delivery. In addition, the ongoing resource constraints led to conflicts over scarce local resources. The comprehensive refugee response framework and the Global Refugee Forum offered a comprehensive approach to addressing displacement by giving due attention to four actors – refugees, host countries, countries of origin and third countries – based on the broad recognition that host countries shouldered the greatest burden and should be provided with assistance, in keeping with the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing. The support base must be broadened. Transparency should be maximized and accountability ensured by expanding demand-driven models and shortening funding pathways. National and local capacity-building efforts were vital. Ethiopia encouraged donors, partners and UNHCR to continue prioritizing those developing countries that hosted the largest number of refugees and provide adequate, need-based, flexible funding.

4. **Ms. Atteya** (Egypt) said that predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing and sustainable and durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers were essential. Persistent underfunding, with an alarming shortfall in available funds as compared to needs, and the continual influx of refugees and asylum-seekers jeopardized the sustainability and quality of the services that Egypt – a country with more than 283,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers and, according to recent estimates, more than 9 million migrants in refugee-like situations – provided to those groups. Her Government welcomed the Office's continued efforts to encourage the donor community to increase unearmarked assistance to host

countries and expand resettlement programmes. It also welcomed the immense support being shown in the face of new humanitarian crises but called on the international community not to turn its attention away from older, protracted crises.

5. Her Government welcomed the acknowledgment of resettlement as a key area of protection response in the report of the High Commissioner on the programme budget for 2023 (A/AC.96/1224) and hoped that the Office's efforts in that area would extend to refugees and asylum-seekers in protracted situations of displacement. It also welcomed the 4 per cent increase in allocations for UNHCR activities in Egypt, which the Director of Division of Strategic Planning and Results had explained was for the areas of protection and cash-based interventions. More funding was needed to support registration and status determination units in Egypt, the country's transition to a national asylum system and resettlement programmes.

6. **Ms. Nzioki** (Kenya) said that Kenya noted with concern the 24 per cent increase in the number of persons of concern projected to occur between 2021 and 2023 and the increase in funding shortfalls. It was particularly important to address the shortfall under the global reintegration projects pillar, which was vital for the creation of conditions conducive to return to countries of origin. Protracted and new situations of displacement should receive commensurate political, diplomatic and financial support, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees, which was premised on equitable responsibility-sharing within the international community. Kenya welcomed the budget increases for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region and the country office in Kenya but called for continued flexibility, as the needs in the region continued to develop, owing in part to the climate emergency. Given the growing intensity and frequency of displacement caused by climate change, Kenya welcomed the Office's decision to develop operation-specific plans of action that took account of the regional context and to advance solutions for the protection of people displaced by climate change and disasters. Such initiatives should be aligned with existing regional ones to avoid duplication of effort and enhance complementarity. Kenya urged the Office to amplify the call for innovative financing to increase the resilience to climate shocks of the countries most affected by climate change. The availability of sufficient unearmarked funding was paramount for the protection of persons of concern, especially in rapidly changing operational contexts.

7. **Mr. Mavima** (Zimbabwe) said that his Government appreciated the proposed increase in the budget for southern Africa but urged UNHCR to continue its resource mobilization efforts with a view to reducing the disparity between the resources available and his country's needs. Zimbabwe also welcomed the increase in the number of women among UNHCR staff and the measures taken to shorten the recruitment process to allow for a quick response to emerging crises. The Office should take steps to increase the number of staff, particularly female staff, from southern Africa and provide an explanation as to why the number of such staff was currently quite low. The growing funding shortfall coupled with the low staffing level militated against delivery on the pledges made under the Global Compact on Refugees.

8. **Ms. Clements** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the Standing Committee had engaged in an intensive discussion about the difficult choices reflected in the proposed budget. The Office was very aware of the responsibility that the increase in the number of persons being served by UNHCR had put on host countries and had tried to capture in the budget the needs not only of refugees and displaced persons but also of host communities. As the representatives of Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya and Zimbabwe had noted, there was a significant disparity between the level of funding available and that needed. The Office would continue to do its best to raise the necessary resources.

9. The Office had said that it would prepare a brief for Member States the next programme year to explain its reading of the recommendations it received, particularly those from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. The Office followed up on the Advisory Committee's recommendations every year, and only one recommendation from the previous year, regarding the complicated matter of alignment with United Nations planning, had not been implemented. It did, however, intend to enhance alignment at both the central and country levels. Information about the Office's working planning assumptions would be woven into the regular budget briefs, including the one to be

delivered at the March meeting of the Standing Committee. The Office had also taken note of the request for a procurement brief.

10. **The Chair** said that he wished to draw delegations' attention to the draft general decision on administrative and financial matters that was before the Committee as decision 1. Prior to the seventy-third session, Executive Committee members had held an informal preparatory consultation to discuss and negotiate the text of decisions to be presented to the Committee at that session.

11. **Mr. González Mayagoitia** (Rapporteur) said that the general decision on administrative, financial and programme matters was a standard decision that was adopted each year. Under the decision before the Committee, the Committee would approve, in paragraph (a), the revised budgetary requirements for 2022 for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters, amounting to \$10.5 billion, and in paragraph (c), the programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters for 2023, in the amount of \$10.21 billion. The decision would also authorize the High Commissioner to create supplementary budgets and issue special appeals in case of emergency needs that could not be met fully from the operational reserve. He wished to acknowledge the active involvement of delegations in the consultations on the draft decision and the flexibility that they had shown, which had resulted in a draft that all could agree on.

12. **The Chair** said he took it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the programme budget for 2023, as set out in the draft decision.

13. *It was so decided.*

#### **Review of the global consultations with non-governmental organizations held in 2022**

14. **Mr. Hydrogene** (Refugee United Nations Volunteer) said that the global consultations, held over three days in June 2022, had been attended by 25 organizations led by forcibly displaced or stateless persons, 29 faith-based organizations, 89 national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 82 international NGOs. The consultations had focused on the themes of localization and climate action and had resulted in a set of 30 recommendations that built on the outcomes of earlier regional and monthly global consultations.

15. The recommendations reflected a collective understanding that localized responses to traditional and new drivers of displacement must be developed through consultation. There was a need to promote organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons, marginalized groups and other local actors as equal partners. Local organizations' specific knowledge of the problems facing their communities put them in an exceptional position to provide an appropriate response.

16. Two principal recommendations focused on increasing the participation of refugees and local organizations in policymaking and highlighted structural barriers to the recognition of refugee-led initiatives, language barriers and obstacles arising from the use of humanitarian jargon. UNHCR was encouraged to be more transparent in its initiatives to achieve its localization goals and to more effectively transfer ideas, resources and skills from headquarters to regional bureaux and national offices. Member States were encouraged to advance the localization agenda by delivering on the commitments made under the Grand Bargain.

17. **Ms. Douglas** (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)) said that the recommendations on climate change that had come out of the global consultations focused on improving preparedness, resilience and adaptation, enhancing the role of local actors and mitigating the risk of climate change-related displacement. The discussions had highlighted the importance of strengthening inclusive early warning and coordination mechanisms to mobilize local, regional and global actors in support of national Governments and communities, increasing engagement with local communities in all phases of preparing for emergencies and taking local knowledge into account in the development of responses. Displaced populations who were empowered and included in decision-making processes could become ambassadors for disaster risk reduction and climate action.

18. Participants had recalled that people crossing borders to flee the adverse effects of climate change could have valid claims for refugee status and had recommended that existing refugee and human rights instruments should be applied in contexts of cross-border displacement related to climate change. Member States were encouraged to mainstream considerations of displacement related to climate change and disasters into national development plans through a whole-of-government approach. The full set of recommendations was available online.

19. The most resounding message from the consultations was that there was a need for quality, multi-year funding. UNHCR and NGOs would continue to work closely together, in particular to follow up on the top 12 recommendations as selected by participants.

20. **Mr. Widmer** (Switzerland) said that Switzerland noted with interest the recommendations that had come out of the consultations. The themes of localization and climate action encompassed issues relating to accountability and the participation of persons of concern, issues that were particularly important to Switzerland. It was essential not only that local NGOs, civil society and persons of concern should actively participate in the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, to be co-hosted by Switzerland, but also that concrete steps should be taken to support them with technical and financial assistance. Switzerland urged UNHCR to carefully review the 30 recommendations with a view to determining whether and to what extent they could be implemented, what the administrative and legal implications of the implementation would be, what resources would need to be mobilized, who the implementation partners would be, how accountability would be ensured and how COMPASS, the new strategic planning system, would be used for reporting and monitoring.

21. **Ms. Valls Noyes** (United States of America) said that the work of NGOs was essential in order for UNHCR to deliver on its mandate. The United States welcomed the increase in the number of partnerships between UNHCR and local actors, including local governments, which accounted for 83 per cent of the Office's partnership arrangements; the commitment under the Grand Bargain to direct 25 per cent of expenditure to local and national entities; and the Office's ongoing efforts to train and coach local and national partners.

22. The United States supported the Office's decision to make permanent the changes that had been introduced to the Project Partnership Agreements during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Those changes had led to simplified procedures under more than 1,700 such agreements. The United States was encouraged by reports that the processes for developing such agreements had been streamlined, that the time frames for negotiating them had been shortened and that there was now increased budget flexibility for low- and medium-risk partners. It looked forward to updates on how reports of the inconsistent application of reforms relating to reporting requirements, partner capacity assessments and risk ratings, and country-level personnel and programme cost determinations were being addressed.

23. The United States recognized the increased outreach work that UNHCR was doing with its partners and encouraged it to expand its efforts to even more local and national NGOs. The United States encouraged UNHCR to continue to use multi-year planning and partnership agreements wherever possible, to increase their availability and to proactively inform regional and local partners whenever they became available. The United States appreciated the promotion of climate action as a theme of the 2022 NGO consultations. It was critical for UNHCR and NGOs to continue to collaborate on the issue and ensure that local voices were included in the response.

24. **Ms. Douglas** (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) said that she appreciated the recognition shown for the role played by NGOs in implementing services for the forcibly displaced.

25. **The Chair** said that he wished to highlight the importance attached by members of the Executive Committee to the participation of the NGO community in the Committee's debates and to thank NGOs for their consistent, thoughtful contributions.

#### **Other statements**

26. **Ms. Meynet** (Staff Council) said that the Staff Council had recently shared with the High Commissioner its concerns regarding the safety of staff members in Ethiopia, given the

renewed fighting and ongoing airstrikes. The Council asked that measures be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of UNHCR staff in all locations.

27. The Council welcomed the new policy on flexible work arrangements endorsed by the High Commissioner. While it also welcomed the launch of the new human resources platform, Workday, the accompanying simplification of staff recruitment and reassignment procedures and the increased flexibility of criteria for promotion in the international category, it was concerned that the experience of long-serving colleagues was no longer appreciated. Only 30 per cent of UNHCR staff had more than five years' experience in the organization, and a troubling number of positions at higher grades were filled externally rather than through internal promotion.

28. The Council hoped that the new degree of flexibility would enable more staff members in national positions to transition to international ones. It was concerned that recent budget cuts would lead to the separation of experienced staff members, particularly those in national positions. National positions should be cut only as a last resort, as the staff members in them could not reapply and rotate. The rotation strategy should give priority to staff members whose posts had been affected by budget cuts.

29. The Council hoped that longer-term and continuing contracts would be made available following the planned revision of the contracts policy in 2022 and that the new performance management system, Evolve, would allow the achievements of all team members, and not just of senior managers, to be recognized.

30. If UNHCR was to remain an attractive employer, it must address the impact inflation was having on the value of staff salaries in many countries. Post adjustments and benefits for international professional staff must also be brought to a competitive level.

31. The Council was committed to strengthening staff-management relations. The High Commissioner should fully consider the recommendations of the Joint Advisory Committee, and the role of the Joint Review Board on recruitment and assignment of internal professional staff should be strengthened. The Council would soon launch a campaign to promote harmonious work relations and take a stand against all forms of harassment, discrimination, racism, bullying and abuse of authority.

32. **Ms. Clements** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees) said that she wished to thank the Staff Council for its tireless work in bringing the concerns of staff to the attention of management through various forums. For example, it had, through the Joint Advisory Committee, continuously provided input on the expansive policy framework behind the Workday platform. Intensive interagency discussions were taking place on the issue of post adjustments, an issue that UNHCR could not address alone. Experience was indeed appreciated, and UNHCR relied on experienced staff members to help newer ones. The Office not only encouraged staff members in national positions to assume international responsibilities, it also aimed to make it possible for staff members working in one region to shift nimbly to another. While the UNHCR workforce was very diverse, staff tended to work in their regions of origin. The Office would be exploring additional tools in the coming months to encourage greater diversity across the organization.

33. **The Chair** said that the Executive Committee highly appreciated the courage and dedication of UNHCR staff, without whom the work that it asked UNHCR to carry out would not be possible. The Committee counted on the Staff Council to keep it abreast of developments affecting staff.

### **Programme of work of the Standing Committee**

#### **Consideration of the provisional agenda of the seventy-fourth session of the Executive Committee**

34. **The Chair** said that the two agenda items under consideration related to the work of the Executive Committee and the Standing Committee in 2023 and included a number of draft decisions that had been reviewed and agreed upon by members of the Executive Committee during informal preparatory consultations.

35. **Mr. González Mayagoitia** (Rapporteur) said that decision 2 dealt with the revision of the financial rules for voluntary contributions administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees. The final version of revision 12 of the rules had been shared with member States after consultations had been held with them and the views of the Board of Auditors and the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee had been sought, and it was that revision that was the subject of the decision. The decision acknowledged the importance of a financial governance framework that supported organizational transformation, endorsed the proposed revision and requested that the High Commissioner should promulgate the revision 12 with an effective date of 1 January 2023.

36. Decisions 3 to 6 addressed the Committees' work in the coming year. Decision 3 reaffirmed the traditional framework for the programme of work of the Standing Committee in 2023, as established in the 2004 decision on working methods. It authorized the Committee to add or delete items, as appropriate, and requested member States to meet in December 2022 to prepare a detailed workplan. It also called on UNHCR to be explicit and analytical in its reports to the Standing Committee and to submit documentation in a timely manner. The importance of a substantive and interactive debate in meetings, and the need to respect the purely humanitarian and non-political nature of the Executive Committee's work was emphasized.

37. The following three decisions were also procedural. Decision 4 addressed observer participation in meetings of the Standing Committee, the standard provisional agenda would be adopted for the seventy-fourth session of the Executive Committee under decision 5 and decision 6 addressed the participation of intergovernmental organizations in private meetings of the Executive Committee.

38. **The Chair** said that Angola, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Panama and Ukraine had made official requests to participate in the meetings of the Standing Committee as observers. He suggested that the names of those States should be added to the agreed text of draft decision 4.

39. *It was so decided.*

40. **Mr. Tarutin** (Russian Federation) said that his Government appreciated the high level of cooperation demonstrated with respect to the revision of the financial rules in the run-up to the current session and the fact that the opinions of the Board of Auditors and the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee had been sought. On the whole, it had no objections to the new version. It would be grateful to have the Office's views on the effectiveness of the new financial rules at a later point.

41. **The Chair** said he took it that the Executive Committee wished to adopt the draft decisions.

42. *It was so decided.*

#### **Election of officers**

43. **Mr. Ahmad** (Chad) nominated Ms. Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti) for the office of Chair.

44. **Ms. Smith** (Norway) seconded the nomination.

45. *Ms. Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

46. **Mr. Czech** (Poland) nominated Ms. Stasch (Germany) for the office of first Vice-Chair.

47. **Mr. Tibaleka** (Uganda) seconded the nomination.

48. *Ms. Stasch (Germany) was elected first Vice-Chair by acclamation.*

49. **Ms. Méndez Escobar** (Mexico) nominated Mr. Izquierdo Miño (Ecuador) for the office of second Vice-Chair.

50. **Ms. Díaz-Rato Revuelta** (Spain) seconded the nomination.

51. *Mr. Izquierdo Miño (Ecuador) was elected second Vice-Chair by acclamation.*

52. **Mr. Ferzli** (Lebanon) nominated Mr. Gul (Pakistan) for the office of Rapporteur.

53. **Mr. Doğan** (Türkiye) seconded the nomination.

54. *Mr. Gul (Pakistan) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

55. **Ms. Ahmed Hassan** (Djibouti) said that she wished to thank the members of the Executive Committee for their trust and express her gratitude to Mr. Baddoura of Lebanon for his tireless efforts during his tenure as Chair. She also wished to congratulate the High Commissioner on the extension of his mandate and assure him of her commitment to working in close collaboration with him. It was the task of all members to enhance international protection, find durable solutions and bring about greater burden- and responsibility-sharing, keeping the refugees at the centre of their concerns.

#### **Adoption of the report of the seventy-third session of the Executive Committee** (A/77/12/Add.1)

56. **The Chair** said that members would now consider the draft report of Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on its seventy-third session, which reflected the decisions adopted during the plenary meetings and had been made available to delegations the previous evening.

57. **Mr. González Mayagoitia** (Rapporteur) said that chapters I and II of the report provided an overview of the five days of the session. Chapter III contained the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support on which member States had reached agreement on 29 September 2022. He wished to thank all delegations for the efforts they had made to allow the conclusion to be adopted by consensus. During the session, decisions had been adopted on the 2023 budget; the revision of the financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner, the 2023 programme of work of the Standing Committee, observer participation, the provisional agenda for the seventy-fourth plenary session of the Executive Committee and the participation of intergovernmental organizations in private meetings of the Executive Committee. Once adopted, the report would be submitted to the Third Committee of the General Assembly for consideration, as an addendum to the High Commissioner's annual report.

58. **Ms. Szűcs** (Hungary) said that Hungary had actively engaged in the negotiations on the draft conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support because it recognized the importance of providing guidance to UNHCR. It appreciated the contribution of host States that provided international protection to large numbers of refugees and did its part to ease the burden on those countries. It had also launched one of its largest humanitarian relief operations to provide Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons with much-needed assistance. However, Hungary had neither endorsed nor affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees nor had it participated in the implementation of the Compact in any way, including through the Global Refugee Forum. It therefore did not acknowledge the relevance of the Global Compact on Refugees and could not support references to it in official documents. While Hungary joined the consensus in adopting the conclusion, it disassociated itself from any paragraphs containing references to the Compact. Her Government asked that its comments be included in the report of the Executive Committee on its seventy-third session.

59. **Mr. Nwachukwu** (Holy See) said that his delegation was grateful for the transparent and respectful manner in which the consultations on the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support had been conducted. Health should never be instrumentalized to further political or ideological agendas, and its spiritual dimension must not be overlooked. While the pain of victims of sexual violence must be fully recognized, consideration should also be given to the acute stress affecting victims of trauma resulting from other causes, including racial discrimination, torture and other forms of violence. The Holy See dissociated itself from the content of the Joint Interagency Call for Action on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support referred to in the conclusion, a call that had not resulted from intergovernmental negotiations and that contained controversial concepts, and understood the references to "gender" to mean "male and female", in line with the general and historical usage of the word. The Holy See hoped that concrete measures of support would be provided to countries that hosted large numbers of refugees despite their own difficulties. Such support should not be subject to political or ideological considerations.



60. **Mr. Tummers** (Netherlands) said the Netherlands believed that mental health and psychosocial support should form as integral a part of humanitarian and refugee response as shelter, water and food. Such support should be provided for from the beginning of planning and programming cycles, under human resource policies and in connection with the duty of care. The Netherlands welcomed the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support, hoped the conclusion would serve as a framework for the crucial work of UNHCR and its partners in providing such support and urged UNHCR to push for the integration of such support into all sectors of humanitarian and refugee response. UNHCR played an important role in ensuring the systematic inclusion of such support in all protection work and the work of the Global Protection Cluster. The Netherlands urged UNHCR and all humanitarian actors to ensure the systematic rollout of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package so that such support would be provided in a more holistic, effective and coordinated manner.

61. **Ms. Farjon Israel** (Israel) said that Israel welcomed the conclusion on mental health and psychosocial support, an issue that it considered a priority. The negotiating process had been difficult but transparent, and all members had shown flexibility. Israel had accepted the deletion of references to age, gender and diversity with difficulty and would continue to highlight their importance. Political agendas that deviated from the goal of providing guidance to UNHCR should not enter into the negotiation of conclusions.

62. *The draft report of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme on its seventy-third session was adopted.*

#### **Closing of the session**

63. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that many delegations had taken the floor over the preceding week to discuss efforts to protect refugees and internally displaced persons. Most of the conflicts that they had referred to demonstrated the increasing inadequacy of existing conflict-resolution mechanisms. The unchecked climate emergency, profound economic inequality and the ease of human mobility, often facilitated by human traffickers, had resulted in population movements of unprecedented size and complexity. During the session, speakers had consistently focused on the need to address the root causes of displacement and to pursue solutions that would enable refugees and other displaced persons to return home.

64. Solidarity remained strong. Host countries had spoken about how they kept their borders open and received and protected those in need despite the enormity of the economic, political and climatic challenges that they themselves faced, but they had also noted how heavily large refugee populations weighed on their schools and health services and the public purse. Host countries and communities were the biggest donors to refugees, and their support could be difficult to sustain without the prospect of solutions.

65. He trusted that greater emphasis would be placed on efforts to find solutions in the 14 months leading to the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees, which remained a document of reference for the overwhelming majority of Member States. Until solutions were found, protection must be provided to those forced to flee. He wished to remind delegations of each State's obligation to ensure access to its territory to all people seeking asylum.

66. As a number of speakers had mentioned, development support to refugee-hosting countries must be increased. He welcomed the recent adoption by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of a methodology for tracking development finance for refugee situations, return situations and situations involving internally displaced persons through the OECD Creditor Reporting System, which would help stakeholders consider the totality of resources allocated to such situations and provide coordinated support to refugees and host communities. He was grateful to donor States and reiterated his appeal to States to help offset the critical \$700 million shortfall in funding for UNHCR programmes. He wished to thank the members for the continued trust in UNHCR that many of them had expressed.

67. **The Chair**, after expressing his gratitude to all those who had helped him steer the work of the Executive Committee during the previous year, declared closed the seventy-third

session of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*