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Summary record of the 720th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 7 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Delmi..... (Algeria)

Contents

General debate (*continued*)

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

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Amon-Tanoh** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his country had hosted, in February 2015, the conference of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at which the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness had been signed. The Declaration constituted a major instrument for combating statelessness in the region with the 25 measures that it envisaged. At the national level, Côte d'Ivoire had taken the following measures: the adoption and implementation of legislation on the acquisition of Ivorian nationality, which had already been of direct benefit to over 16,000 descendants of immigrants; the implementation of a special civil registration procedure for primary school pupils, which had led to 630,000 birth certificates being issued; the creation of the National Civil Register and the allocation of national identification numbers; and the adoption of legislation establishing a simplified procedure for registering births, restoring identity and transcribing birth certificates. The efforts undertaken by Côte d'Ivoire had led to the return of 1,573 Ivorian refugees since the start of 2019. To date, over 90 per cent of the 300,000 Ivorians who had fled the country had returned. In view of the improved security and human rights situation, economic growth and the far-reaching social programme put in place by the Government, repatriated Ivorian refugees were now able to resettle in the country on a sustainable basis. True to its policy of hospitality, Côte d'Ivoire was currently hosting 1,977 refugees of 27 different nationalities, who had been granted biometric identity cards that were valid for five years. Thanks to the system of universal health coverage, as of January 2020, those refugees would have the same access to health care as Ivorians. Refugee children also enjoyed free access to primary education.

2. **Mr. Mascioli** (Switzerland) said there had been an increase in the number of applications for recognition of statelessness made in his country in recent years and that stateless persons were guaranteed the same economic and social rights as Swiss citizens. In 2019, Switzerland had decided to make a contribution of 61 million Swiss francs to help people affected by the Syrian crisis, in both the Syrian Arab Republic and its neighbouring countries. Switzerland welcomed the new policy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on internal displacement and the adoption of an area-based approach in which assistance was provided in accordance with the needs of people and not with their status. It further welcomed the Office's regionalization and decentralization efforts, which should complement, and not replace, efforts to involve local actors and risk sharing. The Global Refugee Forum, which was scheduled to be held in Geneva in December 2019, would be a milestone in the implementation of the global compact on refugees. At that event, Switzerland would announce concrete commitments, share best practices and do everything within its power to initiate a dialogue with all stakeholders, including representatives from civil society and refugees.

3. **Ms. O'Connell** (United States of America) said that Member States would succeed in eradicating statelessness if they took concrete action and demonstrated political will. The United States called for nationality law reforms in the 25 countries that did not allow women to confer citizenship to their children on an equal basis with men. The United States would be taking part in the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. In accordance with the United States Strategy on Women, Peace and Security and its "Safe from the Start" initiative, it would use the occasion to highlight best practices to maximize the protection afforded to women and girls in conflict areas and emergency situations. It would also present its efforts to ensure access to quality education for displaced children. The United States remained committed to leading the world in humanitarian assistance. It had made significant contributions to the Global Concessional Financing Facility and the eighteenth replenishment of the International Development Association regional sub-window for refugees and host communities and had donated nearly \$1.7 billion to UNHCR in 2019.

4. **Mr. Cheick** (Djibouti) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of African States. In order to honour the commitments set out in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Djibouti had undertaken legislative reforms aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of refugees. Moreover, refugee children

had been fully integrated into the national school system. However, there were cases of refugees who had benefited from voluntary repatriation programmes to return to their countries of origin but who had been unable to settle in their new surroundings and had subsequently decided to return to the camp that they had left. Those persons, who had lost their refugee status upon repatriation, received little attention from international refugee protection agencies. They nonetheless accounted for nearly 13 per cent of the population of Djibouti. It was important to draw lessons from such cases and to create the necessary conditions for the durable reintegration of refugees, including by providing them with access to income-generating activities in their countries of origin. In recent years, droughts and floods related to climate change had been a major drain on his country's meagre resources. Something thus urgently needed to be done to combat climate change, which acted as an additional cause of vulnerability for both refugees and local populations.

5. **Ms. Monteiro** (Observer for Guinea-Bissau) said that, since 2017, her country had been taking measures to simplify the process of acquiring citizenship for stateless persons and refugees and the birth registration process for children born in the country to refugee parents. National authorities and civil society organizations were working alongside ECOWAS and United Nations agencies to eradicate statelessness in West Africa. In the framework of the #IBelong campaign to end statelessness and a separate regional initiative, Guinea-Bissau had ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Moreover, a study on the risks of statelessness in the country had been carried out, awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted and training sessions on statelessness had been organized for the judges, prosecutors and lawyers of Guinea-Bissau. Birth registration offices had also been set up in the country's major hospitals. With regard to the integration of persons in protracted refugee situations, 4,282 refugees had been issued with national identity cards and 2,761 had obtained citizenship certificates.

6. **Mr. Mohd Yassin** (Observer for Malaysia) said that his country had made its procedures for naturalization applications and birth registrations more transparent. Measures had also been taken to facilitate adoptions and to combat the sale and trafficking of children. The Child Act 2001 had been amended in 2016 to guarantee the right of all children to receive protection and care, regardless of their status or nationality. A task force on undocumented persons had been set up and had recently contributed to the approval of 1,641 applications for naturalization. Moreover, a total of 227,481 applications in 8,412 outreach sessions had been facilitated by the National Registration Department from 2012 to 2017 under the "MyDaftar" programme. During the first eight months of 2019, a further 1,066 outreach sessions had been held. Although Malaysia had not signed the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it hosted many stateless persons who arrived from other countries in the region, particularly Myanmar, notwithstanding the financial challenges and social tensions thereby created.

7. **Mr. Kampyongo** (Zambia) said that his country hosted more than 84,500 persons of concern to UNHCR, including over 61,300 refugees, 76 per cent of whom had arrived from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and were currently living in refugee settlements and urban areas. The Zambian authorities were developing a refugee policy in order to strengthen implementation of the Refugees Act of 2017. Moreover, the country continued to implement the comprehensive refugee response framework. To that end, it needed support from humanitarian and development actors to help it to improve the living conditions faced by refugees in settlements. Zambia also reaffirmed its commitment to the #IBelong campaign and the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024. Moreover, the national legal framework, which guaranteed the right to nationality, was largely compatible with international standards on statelessness.

8. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the efforts made by the States and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR.

9. **Ms. Nzenza** (Zimbabwe) said that her country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of African States. Her country was grateful to UNHCR for the support that it had lent the refugees who were hosted in the Tongogara camp and the Zimbabweans who had been affected by Cyclone Idai, which had caused over 400 fatalities.

The Government of Zimbabwe continued to provide support for victims by way of the measures it was taking within the framework of the Post Cyclone Idai Emergency Recovery and Resilience Project. As demonstrated by the situation facing Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi, climate change was a reality. However, although developed countries had grasped that reality, the same could not be said for some developing countries, where persons directly affected by climate change often suffered in silence. Zimbabwe was seeking to modernize and to develop its technological capabilities in order to mitigate the impact of cyclones and droughts and the more general effects of climate change. The country was committed to working alongside UNHCR to raise public awareness and to promote the rights of refugees and displaced persons. It was also considering ratifying the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

10. **Mr. Sirleaf** (Observer for Liberia) said that his country was currently hosting 8,529 refugees. Although 978 Ivorian refugees had returned to their country since September 2019, the total number of Ivorian refugees in Liberia was still expected to reach roughly 5,000 by December 2019. The country was therefore calling for greater support to ensure that those people could be received in a stable and peaceful security environment. It was taking concrete measures with a view to providing sustainable solutions to all the refugees present in its territory. For example, in 2018, the Government and UNHCR had developed a road map for the local integration of Ivorian refugees and 127 ha of land had been allocated to host regions. The Government was also taking steps to amend the Alien and Nationality Law, under which Liberian women married to foreigners were prohibited from passing on their nationality to their children, in order to bring it into line with the country's Constitution. Liberia had signed both the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons but had yet to incorporate their provisions into domestic law. Nonetheless, it had drafted a national action plan for the eradication of statelessness and was working alongside the United Nations Population Fund to ensure that questions on statelessness were included in the National Population and Housing Census 2020.

11. **Mr. Bagoro** (Observer for Burkina Faso) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States. His country also wished to thank all the countries that had supported its candidacy to become a member of the Executive Committee. Mindful of the serious consequences of statelessness, a condition affecting an estimated 10 million people worldwide according to UNHCR, Burkina Faso was working to implement the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024 and had endorsed the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017–2024. Furthermore, in 2017, the Government had adopted a national plan on combating statelessness to run concurrently with the #IBelong campaign and had acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In 2018, preliminary research into statelessness and the risks of statelessness had been conducted in five regions with a view to improving the quantitative and qualitative data available. Work on the implementation of the recommendations from that study was under way. His country was also committed to amending the law on nationality and civil status, to adopting a law on the status of stateless persons and to establishing a statelessness determination procedure. Burkina Faso currently hosted 25,761 refugees and over 10,000 asylum seekers of different nationalities. In addition, 300,000 people had been internally displaced because of the prevailing security situation in the country. In order to address the needs of those people, the Government had launched a humanitarian response plan for 2019, which required an estimated \$187 million in funding.

12. **Ms. Farouq** (Nigeria) said that her country aligned itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States. Statelessness was nothing new in Nigeria. The cession of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon in 2002 and the uprising led by Boko Haram in 2009 had caused mass displacements. As a result, Nigeria had ratified the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and had signed the Abidjan Declaration of Ministers of ECOWAS Member States on Eradication of Statelessness. The country had made the following pledges: to adopt regulations guaranteeing the registration of children born to naturalized Nigerians; to establish a refugee status determination procedure; to publish a qualitative study on statelessness; to issue more birth certificates and identity documents; and to carry

out legislative reforms aimed at granting nationality to children born on the national territory who would otherwise be stateless. Nigeria was also implementing a national action plan to eradicate statelessness, under which the following priorities had been set: research into the root causes of statelessness; awareness-raising on the rights of stateless persons; the prevention of childhood statelessness; the implementation of resettlement and reintegration measures in the context of the cession of the Bakassi peninsula; the fight against gender-based discrimination; and the comprehensive protection of stateless persons and migrants.

13. **Mr. Tamulevičius** (Lithuania) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. Lithuania shared the High Commissioner's concerns regarding the increase in humanitarian needs associated with conflict, climate change and natural disasters. Every year, it allocated funds to UNHCR to contribute to the mitigation of humanitarian crises. The global compact on refugees served as a means to strengthen international cooperation with a view to ensuring that refugees could return safely to their countries of origin. The international community also needed to take strong action to address the situation facing internally displaced persons, whether in Georgia, Myanmar or Ukraine. Lithuania had acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and supported the #IBelong campaign and the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024. Over the previous five years, the number of stateless persons in the country had fallen by 21 per cent (98 per cent of stateless persons held a permanent residence permit). The country was considering various measures aimed at reducing the number of stateless persons in Lithuania, including amending the Law on Citizenship, granting citizenship to children born on the national territory to stateless parents who held a residence permit, assessing whether the absence of legal provisions on the determination of statelessness posed difficulties in practice, and analysing the situations of stateless persons with a view to determining why they were not applying for Lithuanian citizenship.

14. **Mr. Rahmani Fazli** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country had been hosting refugees, mainly from Afghanistan, for 40 years. The Islamic Republic of Iran had therefore helped to contain the flow of refugees worldwide in spite of the lack of support that it had received from the international community. According to a recent report published by UNHCR, 84 per cent of refugees were hosted by developing countries, which meant that those States shouldered a disproportionate burden in that regard. The Islamic Republic of Iran called for greater efforts on the part of the international community to resolve that situation and bring an end to the policies that had led to a situation in which refugees were concentrated in just a few developing countries. It hoped that the Global Refugee Forum, which would take place in December, would contribute to relieving the pressure on host countries and to fostering greater responsibility-sharing. The Islamic Republic of Iran continued to offer the same services to refugees as it did to Iranian nationals, including free schooling, identity documents, the possibility to obtain a driving licence, access to justice, access to vaccinations and primary health care for women and children, and free health insurance for the most vulnerable. Furthermore, 16,500 refugees were studying at Iranian universities and 250,000 had been granted a temporary work permit. The Islamic Consultative Assembly had approved a law guaranteeing children with Iranian mothers and foreign fathers the right to Iranian nationality. However, the sanctions imposed by the United States of America had had an extremely negative impact on the education, health and livelihoods of refugees. His country therefore called on the international community to condemn those measures and to allocate the funds required to deliver humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people and their host communities.

15. **Mr. Onek** (Uganda) said that his country had adopted a national action plan on the implementation of the global compact on refugees and the comprehensive refugee response framework in order to translate its refugee policy into action. Uganda hosted more refugees than any other country in Africa. Its refugee population of over 1.3 million, made up predominantly of individuals from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda and Eritrea, was the third largest in the world. Over the previous eight months, it had received over 70,000 refugees fleeing the insecurity and instability that affected the region, and there were no signs that the situation would improve any time soon. It was common knowledge that forced displacement in the region was creating challenges for host countries, above all when it came to guaranteeing access to basic services, and the

international community thus needed to act quickly to address the chronic funding shortages that could end up preventing those countries from welcoming new migrants. The Ugandan Government had adopted an inclusive approach that provided refugees with access to land, education and health care and guaranteed them freedom of movement and the right to work. To facilitate its implementation of that policy, the country had been granted \$50 million of credit by the World Bank. It had also adopted a policy of hosting refugees without settling them in camps aimed at promoting their economic integration, which would guarantee respect for their dignity and strengthen their independence. In accordance with the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing, Uganda called on the international community to contribute funds in support of the Government's plans regarding the priority areas of education, health, water and the environment, which would be of benefit to both refugees and host communities. In order to maintain the civilian character of asylum in a region experiencing mixed migration flows, Uganda had introduced a screening procedure at border points with the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to ensure that all persons in need of international protection were successfully identified; a refugee appeals board had also been created to streamline refugee status determination procedures. With a view to continuing to receive refugees and to guarantee them a range of rights enabling them to live in dignity until they could return home in safety, his Government called on the international community to address the root causes of forced displacement in the region and to fulfil the commitments that had been established under the Grand Bargain, including those relating to resettlement in third countries. Lastly, Uganda had developed a national action plan to eradicate statelessness and had set itself the target of achieving that goal by 2024.

16. **Ms. Mejía Hernández** (Colombia) said that her country was extremely concerned about the effect that the collapse of the democratic constitutional order in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had had on the situation of statelessness in Latin America and the Caribbean in general and Colombia in particular. An estimated 1.5 million Venezuelans had found refuge in Colombia and thousands of children born in the country to Venezuelan parents were at risk of statelessness, since many parents were unable to provide the proof of address required under the Constitution in order for their children to be granted Colombian nationality. Furthermore, although children born abroad to Venezuelan parents were entitled to acquire their parents' nationality under Venezuelan law, that right was not being guaranteed in practice because many Venezuelan consulates had closed in Colombia and parents were unable to complete the necessary formalities. In keeping with the objectives of the #IBelong campaign, Colombia intended to eradicate statelessness in its territory by 2024. To that end, it had recently deposited its instrument of ratification to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Moreover, on 5 August 2019, it had taken an administrative measure aimed at granting Colombian nationality to children with Venezuelan parents born in its territory between 19 August 2015 and 20 August 2021, or until such a time as the obstacles currently preventing them from registering as Venezuelan nationals were removed. An estimated 27,909 children stood to benefit from the measure. Lastly, Congress was considering a bill on migration that would provide for the creation of a comprehensive legal framework on statelessness.

17. **Mr. Alemi Balkhi** (Afghanistan) said that 2019 marked the fortieth anniversary of the first large-scale movements of Afghan refugees to Pakistan and Iran. Only the restoration of peace and stability and the creation of the right environment would encourage those refugees to return voluntarily to their home country. The Government took the needs of both returnees and internally displaced persons into consideration when formulating its policies and programmes, by providing them with access to land and by investing in the 15 regions that already hosted the largest number of such persons with a view to ensuring their reintegration, education and training. To put those plans into action, Afghanistan looked forward to receiving support from the international community in the form of official development assistance. In that regard, the Government of Afghanistan was grateful to the European Union for the financial contribution that it had made to its development programmes, to the United States Government for the \$190 million that it had offered to address the needs of returnees and other vulnerable groups, to other donor countries and to host countries such as Pakistan and Iran. Generally speaking, greater international cooperation was required to reduce the number of displaced persons in the world from the

current figure of 70 million. With that in mind, Afghanistan had declared its support for the global compact on refugees and had taken steps to implement the comprehensive refugee response framework. The Government of Afghanistan was also engaged in relentless efforts to combat terrorism and remained equally determined to address the issues of trafficking in human beings and irregular migration, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals. It invited countries of origin, transit and destination for trafficking to take joint action to eradicate that phenomenon. Furthermore, it was intent on facilitating the voluntary return of the roughly 6 million Afghan refugees and migrants in Pakistan and Iran, most of whom were young people needed by their country.

18. **Mr. Afridi** (Pakistan) said that 85 per cent of the world's refugees were hosted by developing countries, whose limited resources made their task onerous. That was particularly the case for Pakistan, which for the previous 40 years had provided a million Afghan refugees in urban areas and 500,000 Afghan refugees in camps with a high level of social protection, including free access to education and health care, despite the gradual decline in financial support that it had received from the international community. Its international partners urgently needed to assume their share of the responsibilities and burdens associated with hosting refugees, as had been the case with the significant funds that had been contributed in support of his country's Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas initiative. Pakistan and its regional partners had decided to extend, until December 2021, the implementation of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees, which focused on voluntary return, sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan and support to host countries. Those host countries faced financial and economic difficulties and should be offered humanitarian assistance; refugee management must remain a humanitarian issue and the responsibility of the entire international community; otherwise, the standard of care for refugees could deteriorate in the long run and cause the public to harbour feelings of rejection towards them. The international community should follow the lead of Pakistan in supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to restore peace and stability, conditions that were a prerequisite for the prompt return and sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees. Lastly, the Government of Pakistan intended to take further measures to reduce statelessness, following the success of a project that had led to the issuance of identity documents to 840,000 Afghan refugees.

19. **Mr. Yai** (Observer for South Sudan) said that his country wished to endorse the statement delivered by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Group of African States and to express its gratitude to every State that had hosted South Sudanese refugees. South Sudan was committed to working closely with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development member States to implement the peace agreement. To that end, it had taken numerous legislative measures, including the incorporation of the language of the peace agreement into the new Constitution, which was currently being drafted. Moreover, the text of the agreement had been distributed throughout the country. The President had promised to form a Government by 12 November 2019, in accordance with the provisions of the agreement. Given that a lack of resources was the only obstacle to the implementation of that agreement, South Sudan was appealing to the international community for the necessary technical and financial support. It had commenced implementation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and currently hosted over 300,000 refugees, all of whom enjoyed freedom of movement and the right to obtain birth certificates, identity documents, travel documents and a card proving their status as asylum seekers. They were also entitled to free public primary and secondary education and enjoyed access to secure housing, land and employment. The national authorities were confident that, once peace was established in the country, South Sudanese refugees would voluntarily return from neighbouring countries. Indeed, over 200,000 nationals had already returned home. In that regard, South Sudan called on the support of UNHCR and the international community with a view to implementing the comprehensive refugee response framework. Lastly, it pledged to eradicate statelessness by 2024 and urged the international community to address the root causes of forced migration.

20. **Ms. Kamayirese** (Rwanda) said that, from her country's perspective, the #IBelong campaign had come along at an opportune moment. Its provisions were in line with a series of measures that Rwanda had taken to guarantee the right to acquire a nationality, including its accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1961

Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the amendment of the Nationality Law to bring it into line with those instruments. Before the end of 2024, Rwanda intended to establish a national task force on statelessness, to adopt a national plan to eradicate statelessness, to enact legislation on nationality aimed at facilitating the naturalization of stateless persons living in Rwanda and their descendants, and to improve access to late birth registration procedures. Her country continued to receive and reintegrate Rwandan returnees, who had been repatriating since December 2017. It currently hosted over 149,000 refugees, 92 per cent of whom had fled from the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, were living in camps and were dependent on humanitarian assistance. It had set up an emergency transit mechanism to offer temporary accommodation to 500 refugees and asylum seekers who were stranded in Libya in very difficult conditions. He thanked the African Union and UNHCR for their involvement in the measures taken under that mechanism to evacuate 66 people from a life-threatening situation. The Government of Rwanda guaranteed the protection and safety of refugees in the country and ensured that they had access to education, health care and income-generating activities. Urban-based refugees and refugee students in boarding schools were covered by the national health insurance system. All refugees aged 16 and above were expected to be issued an identity card by the end of 2019. Such measures placed pressure on host countries and it was therefore critical for development partners and humanitarian agencies to actively participate in the measures taken, particularly when it was aimed at strengthening the self-reliance of refugees. The Government of Rwanda was grateful to the World Bank for allocating it \$60 million to support a project that had been launched in August 2019 as part of the country's efforts to ensure the socioeconomic integration of refugees. Rwanda had always striven to create an enabling environment for those in need of international protection and, to continue to do so, it urgently needed humanitarian funding. Without such support, it was possible that refugees might face food shortages or limited means of livelihood in the future.

21. **Mr. Wanzet-Linguissara** (Observer for the Central African Republic) said that his country, following a long period of crisis during which many people had been displaced and civil registry offices had been destroyed, was now resolutely committed to restoring peace, as demonstrated by the peace agreement that recently had been signed between the Government and the armed groups. Combating statelessness – and, in the process, promoting inclusion – had been made a national priority. In December 2018, a multi-stakeholder seminar had been held in partnership with UNHCR to identify the main causes of statelessness at the national level. On the basis of the recommendations that had been made, a committee of experts had been set up to prepare a draft action plan to eradicate statelessness. The draft text had been approved by the Government and its partners, and a ministerial order to establish and set forth the organization and functioning of a national committee to combat statelessness had been issued on 20 August 2019. The Government had lowered the cost of the naturalization procedure and had granted birth certificates to children born during the crisis period free of charge. It had also created a platform for civil registry partners and organized mobile court hearings to restore civil registry certificates. The Central African Republic intended to eradicate statelessness before the end of the year, to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness before the end of June 2020, to strengthen the capacity of its civil registration services, to simplify the procedure for issuing nationality certificates to Central African returnees by 2020, to improve birth registration procedures and services by 2021, and to reform Act No. 61.212 of 27 May 1961 on the Central African Nationality Code by the end of 2021. To do so, it required multidimensional support from the international community.

22. **Mr. Sall** (Senegal) said that the eradication of statelessness would facilitate the achievement of 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including each of Goals 1 to 6. However, midway through the #IBelong campaign, that target still seemed a long way off. Senegal had made significant progress in combating statelessness, including by participating in all ECOWAS regional and subregional ministerial conferences, organizing a training workshop on international protection and statelessness, approving a plan of action and appointing a national coordinator. Furthermore, the principles of gender neutrality in the granting of nationality and the prohibition of denationalization leading to statelessness

had been incorporated into national law under Act No. 2013-05 of 8 July 2013 amending Act No. 61-10 of 7 March 1961. To end statelessness once and for all, Senegal pledged to establish a regulatory, institutional and operational framework on the status of stateless persons, to adopt a national plan to combat statelessness, to complete the registration of refugees born in Senegal and eligible for naturalization in the civil registry, and to issue official documents serving as birth certificates to refugees who had been born abroad.

23. **Ms. Randrianarisoa Rakotondrajery** (Madagascar) said that the Nationality Code, which had been amended in 2017 with retroactive effect, now provided for the automatic conferral of a mother's nationality to her children, regardless of whether they had been born in or out of wedlock. Act No. 2018-027 of 8 February 2019 on civil status had provided for the computerization of the civil registration system to facilitate the processing of data and the generation of reliable statistics, for the allocation of a unique identification number at birth, for the establishment of a national registry and for the strengthening of civil registration processes. However, there was still neither a procedure for identifying stateless persons nor comprehensive data on persons with that status. Following its participation in the development of the Southern African Development Community plan of action to eradicate statelessness at the regional level, Madagascar had organized a meeting on statelessness in September 2019 attended by representatives from various ministries, the parliament, the Independent National Human Rights Commission, civil society organizations, the media and communities affected by statelessness. A draft national plan of action to resolve major situations of statelessness, to remove discriminatory provisions from legislation relating to nationality, to ensure the registration of all births, to issue nationality documents to those entitled to them and to strengthen the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on stateless persons had subsequently been drawn up and was currently awaiting approval.

24. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he welcomed the increase in the number of pledges, which had risen from 171 to 211 since the beginning of the current high-level debate. He acknowledged the efforts made by the States and thanked them for supporting the work of UNHCR.

25. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was regrettable that Lebanon had been the subject of negative comments at the previous meeting, at a time when a massive influx of refugees was threatening to destabilize the country. Moreover, with regard to the particular case that had been mentioned, the problem had arisen from legal difficulties that were beyond his country's control. Highly complex humanitarian situations often arose as a result of differences between national legal systems, and such problems should be resolved through dialogue rather than accusations.

26. **Mr. Aala** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was disappointing that inaccurate comments had been made at the previous meeting in an attempt to exploit the situation in his country for political gain. Under Legislative Decree No. 276 of 1969 on nationality, all persons born in the Syrian Arab Republic were considered to be of Syrian nationality even if they could not prove that their parents were Syrian. With regard to persons born to Syrian mothers outside the country who could not prove that their fathers were also Syrian, the Civil Code provided for such persons to be registered in their mother's name, thereby entitling them to obtain Syrian nationality. He invited the person who had spoken, both of whose parents were Syrian, to contact the Syrian authorities and request to be entered into the civil registry with a view to obtaining Syrian nationality.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.