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

Distr.: General
1 April 2022
English only

Standing Committee

**Eighty-third meeting
8-10 March 2022**

Held at the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG), Geneva
Summary record*, Wednesday, 10 March 22, at 3 p.m. (hybrid)

Chairperson: Mr. Baddoura..... (Lebanon)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.02 p.m.

Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources (*continued*)

b. Financial Regulations and Rules (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) said that his country supported UNHCR's proposal to develop its own integrated set of financial regulations and rules, and appreciated the consultations it had held with Member States to date to inform that process. Other comparable agencies had their own financial regulations and rules. The USA hoped that that process would continue to move forwards as planned, as it would ultimately improve the clarity, enhance the relevance and lead to greater applicability of UNHCR's financial regulations and rules.

2. **Mr. Banzet** (Canada), noting that the Fifth Committee was scheduled to discuss those UNHCR financial regulations on 18 March, said that his country recognized that having a relevant set of financial regulations and rules that were well adapted to its specific needs would provide UNHCR with the foundation on which the organization could build increased efficiencies when developing corresponding policies, procedures and processes. Canada considered that important for strengthening response and for effective use of its resources to ensure that they had the greatest impact for refugees and other persons of concern. He thanked UNHCR for the detailed analysis of the proposed regulations and rules and for sharing the update on the process for establishing those new regulations and rules.

3. **Mr. Baritt** (Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, UNHCR) thanked Member States for their thorough and extensive engagement in the consultative process both in Geneva and in New York. It was, however, less clear how that welcome support should be used. He renewed his call for Member States to contact colleagues in New York and the Fifth Committee as he and they stood ready to provide additional information on request. The greater the quantity of information available and the better the case could be made, the higher the probability of a positive outcome for collaborating with Member States in 2022 to compare the financial regulations with those rules for UNHCR for all the good reasons highlighted.

4. **Mr. Mindrin** (Russian Federation), expressing his country's gratitude for the thorough consultation process and briefings on the matter, welcomed that the document reflected the feedback and proposals from the last committee meeting. Moreover, funding from the regular United Nations budget was envisaged there.

5. Referring to that matter based on the United Nations financial regulations, there were some articles regulating financial management, including internal and external audit and procurement activities. He hoped that during the preparation of the second draft of the financial regulations there would be an item added that the High Commissioner using the financial regulations and rules would be also led by the corresponding decisions of the Standing Committee.

6. It was important to stipulate in the document that the transparency of the UNHCR financial system was one of the main goals of the UNHCR financial regulations and rules. Along with the impact areas around which the budget was built, pillars and population groups must also be taken into account, as well as where the funding reporting and budgeting was carried out.

7. He would like to know the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and how the financial regulations and rules would be applied to the United Nations regular budget regarding asset redistribution between departments and allocations and the transfer of such assets to the next financial period. It would also be useful to identify the role of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee on UNHCR's financial and regulatory activity.

8. The new document for UNHCR financial regulations and rules needed to assist in enhancing the role of Member States in the programme's financial activities. The new financial rules should ensure free access for receiving finances from all donors. During the Fifth Committee session of the General Assembly he hoped for a positive decision on UNHCR stipulating its own financial rules and regulations, enabling Member States to continue their activity on such an important document for UNHCR.

9. **Mr. Adalberto** (Mexico) said that preparations for the new regulations allowed for a process as transparent as possible, with exchanges with the Office. He welcomed the proposal and took into account all of UNHCR's reactions and comments and ACABQ's appraisal. He further took note of the Office's interest in being endowed with its own financial resources. Mexico was willing to participate in future consultations towards the most useful decisions possible for implementing UNHCR's mandate.

10. **Mr. Baritt** (Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management, UNHCR) said that he had noted eight points in the Russian Federation's welcome, detailed comments, which appeared to be the same as those discussed at the bilateral. As noted previously, all efforts would be made to incorporate those reasonable points into the next draft, pending discussions on the language to be used. Replying to Mexico's welcome comments, he requested that they thank on his behalf the delegate at a previous question and answer session who had presented a very detailed and well thought out set of questions.

c. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office

11. **Mr. Garnett** (Inspector General) said that entering his third year as Inspector General, he had hoped to focus exclusively on how oversight colleagues had continued to perform during another year of the pandemic and on their plans to resume more on-site presence as it, hopefully, neared its conclusion. UNHCR, however was presently handling an unprecedented number of emergencies and scale of humanitarian need.

12. It was the instinct of all humanitarians, including those in the oversight professions, to rush in and assist those in urgent need. In that context, there was presently a risk that of oversight becoming a footnote, both organizationally and in governance terms, to current emergencies.

13. As a lifelong oversight professional, he called for continued focus on the oversight agenda. Oversight helped UNHCR's management, to strengthen its capacity over time to handle humanitarian challenges with integrity. Independent oversight providers, including his Office, sought to ensure that UNHCR was strong, well-managed, well-governed and resilient during emergencies via collegial but independent support of management oversight, assurance, learning, development, systems strengthening and, if necessary, accountability.

14. He would therefore focus on activities undertaken by the Office in 2021 on the oversight coordination and investigations agenda, to complement his paper report. The IGO's mandate and work continued to be guided by UNHCR's Policy on Independent Oversight, ensuring that independent oversight was greater than the sum of its parts and that UNHCR staff and contractors acted with accountability and integrity. In terms of strategic oversight, his Office coordinated the plans and activities of independent oversight providers and analysed findings to ensure organizational learning. For investigations, it had worked on strengthening UNHCR's integrity systems, in partnership with other integrity entities and management; on independent investigations of misconduct; and on recommending enhancements to UNHCR's practices to learn from each integrity breach.

15. Oversight coordination during the past year had focused on ensuring that the synchronized plans of oversight providers for 2021 were delivered. For 2022 it sought to ensure that oversight providers returned to the field in an optimal way as travel restrictions eased. His Office had acted to ensure that coordination was more than simply avoiding duplication or gaps, but also that each oversight provider undertook the right tasks for their skillset, and that lines of enquiry and risk coverage fit together coherently. His Office had also been working with UNHCR's Internal Audit Service in OIOS to modernize and modify their audit approach in accordance with UNHCR's improved risk maturity.

16. He was pleased to report strong collegial and meaningful cooperation between the independent oversight providers, leading to the development of a coherent oversight plan for 2022. A collective oversight approach had been agreed to UNHCR's business transformation programme, the modernization of IT systems and key operational processes. While he had previously noted the risk of oversight being a footnote during emergencies, it was a longer-term risk, rather than an issue-based effort; in fact, oversight providers were also discussing their approach to UNHCR's humanitarian response in Ukraine and surrounding countries actively. Innovative, real-time and

coordinated approaches were being developed to support UNHCR management to address assurance, integrity and protection risks in live time.

17. The IGO had also systematized and regularized the provision of oversight information to UNHCR's senior management by issuing a quarterly 'oversight of oversight' report. Those reports, targeted at Directors of Headquarters Divisions and Regional Bureaux, as well as Country Representatives, had been designed to enhance learning from oversight work; share best practice; and support UNHCR's decentralization and regionalization by providing high-level investigations data and trends to assist the Bureaux in their management oversight responsibilities. One of his Office's objectives was to ensure institutional learning and enhancement from oversight work, through the analysis of findings.

18. His Office had undertaken an advisory review of second-line oversight within UNHCR, in the context of regionalization and decentralization. It had placed management oversight within an overall architecture of control frameworks as well as the organizational restructuring and the business transformation programme, in order to support development of appropriate oversight tools. The analysis had confirmed his view, aligned to the Deputy High Commissioner's, that UNHCR's organizational change programme was the right and critical course of action to significantly enhance UNHCR's economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

19. To enhance organizational strengthening and learning from investigations, the IGO had issued 40 management implication reports in 2021. Those focused internal memoranda had drawn management's attention to generalizable observations based on the Office's investigations and were targeted at the relevant UNHCR colleagues to address root causes. They were also shared with selected oversight colleagues to inform their work. He had also issued thematic oversight analyses from his missions to Uganda and to the Regional Bureau for MENA operations in Jordan and Lebanon.

20. Turning to his Office's investigations work, he said that his paper outlined the key investigations statistics for 2021. Notably, his Office had seen a 27% increase in registered complaints during the year to 1,450, expecting a similar number for 2022. That reflected the positive work undertaken by colleagues to build confidence in UNHCR's complaints mechanisms and the credibility of its response. The geographical concentration of complaints reflected those UNHCR operations with the strongest refugee accountability mechanisms. The top three complaints categories remained – as in 2020 – financial fraud, resettlement fraud, and sexual exploitation and/or abuse.

21. The IGO had taken steps to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its investigative response, given the significant demand on the Investigation Service. It had invested in IT systems by finalizing the upgrade to its case management system and adding remote data extraction capability, thereby reducing the need for field travel and reliance on local IT personnel. As the Deputy High Commissioner had referenced in her opening remarks, it had also supported the initiative to improve the handling of workplace challenges not amounting to misconduct, focusing its resources on misconduct matters. Its online training for partners on how to investigate sexual misconduct had been released in 2021 and was publicly available online at disasterready.org.

22. A special project undertaken at the end of 2021 to address a growing backlog of intake assessments had resulted in a near contemporaneous intake pipeline by year-end by switching resources to intake and refreshing intake procedures to be more discerning. The IGO's investigations team had also undertaken a full professional development programme, including training in handling of sexual misconduct cases and open-source data search. His Office intended to create some limited, proactive investigation space for 2022, and to continue its work with management on the IGO's role over particular misconduct types.

23. In closing, he was pleased to report that, with a welcome return to the field, his Office would reinstate face-to-face work with UNHCR staff and partners on oversight and investigations matters. He expressed his continued deep appreciation for Member States' strong interest in, and support of, his Office's work, as it was integral to UNHCR's organizational resilience and strength.

24. **Mr. Laukkanen** (Finland) said that his country appreciated the independent oversight activities conducted in an increasingly complex environment, greatly affected by the pandemic and other external challenges. He welcomed the resumption of field visits.

25. Finland would appreciate more information on the increase of around 27 per cent in complaints between 2020 and 2021. What kinds of trends and reasons were behind those growing figures?

26. Regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, his country remained concerned by the high number of cases, although there had been a slight decrease in the number of cases compared to 2020. It was of great concern that 83 per cent of those cases implicated implementing partner staff. He asked what kind of concrete measures the Office foresaw to address sexual exploitation and abuse among partner organizations, and what kind of longer-term perspectives it could provide on the issue. Finally, the recently launched external review on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH), conducted under the auspices of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), contained many concrete recommendations on addressing the issue. That process was of great importance. Finland would be grateful to learn more about UNHCR's approach to the review and its implications.

27. **Mr. Mindrin** (Russian Federation) noted that over 2021, the Office had managed to increase its efficiency and resource base. The Inspector General's thorough report on complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse was a welcome inclusion. The progress in investigating those complaints was clear. It was no less important to analyse financial and administrative complaints data, which the Russian Federation hoped to see included in a future report. The Office's work could focus on the implementation scope of a programme of broad reforms to UNHCR, primarily regarding regionalization and decentralization. His country looked forward to hearing how such reforms would strengthen the programme.

28. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) said that his country appreciated the Inspector General's Office's efforts to modernize and ensure strategic coherence in UNHCR's independent oversight activities. The USA appreciated the important value of offices contributing to organizational oversight – including the Inspector General's Office, risk management, and evaluation – in strengthening accountability and learning, and ensuring that UNHCR's work was efficient and effective, and accountable.

29. He commended UNHCR's progress in implementing its IGO five-year strategy; the data offered a good insight into UNHCR's increasingly robust strategic oversight and investigation functions. The Office's adaption of technology based on lessons learned during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was admirable, and her country was interested to see the practical impacts of those changes. The USA supported UNHCR's business transformation initiatives and welcomed the teams' agreement of an oversight plan for the business transformation program. His country was keen to better understand the progress being made on that effort. Similarly, the USA appreciated the Office's critical analysis of regionalization and decentralization efforts and looked forward to greater discussion of the lessons learned.

30. The USA appreciated the data on investigations undertaken during 2021 and appreciated the transparency with which his team had sought to address sensitive issues. As the Inspector General had noted, there was currently insufficient data to indicate meaningful trends, though she agreed that that increased reporting was an indication of confidence in the system. However, at the same time, the number of reports for sexual exploitation and abuse had decreased. She asked what efforts his team was undertaking to benchmark and, ideally, to extrapolate trends in order to identify and address systemic issues. Additionally, as the vast majority of reported complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse had implicated implementing partner staff, he wished to know what approaches UNHCR would undertake to strengthen partner capacity and accountability of implementing partners in that area.

31. The USA was confident that UNHCR was on a strong, reform-oriented trajectory, looking forward to the Office's assessments of the implementation of the business transformation programme and all of its elements, including the much-discussed COMPASS. His team should share its vision to meet a growing demand for responsive investigation capacity and to extrapolate meaningful policy recommendations addressing systemic issues. The 40 some management implication reports issued in 2021 as a result of investigations were a good start; however, effective analysis across cases of misconduct would allow UNHCR management to address the upstream causes and take preventative action.

32. **Ms. Nels** (United Kingdom) expressed her country's appreciation for IGO's efforts to keep Member States informed of its activities and plans, including through the quarterly Integrity Briefings, which were of great importance for allowing the UK to provide the necessary assurance of UNHCR as a key partner. She commended the Office's ongoing commitment and adaptability during such challenging times.

33. With regards to the Strategic Oversight function, the UK would welcome further detail on the workplan for 2022 developed by the independent oversight providers, and the oversight plan for the business transformation programme which were both mentioned. With regards to the section on Investigations, she requested an indication of how many complaints would be or had been rolled over to 2022.

34. The UK welcomed the Office's continued efforts to find ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its investigative work by doing more with the resources available, and applauded its achievement of clearing some of the backlog of complaints from 2020. While she appreciated that it was challenging, she requested further detail on the additional resources referred to in the paper, and also a reminder of staff numbers, as well as any vacancies, within the Office.

35. **Mr. van Mens** (Netherlands), affirming the importance of oversight, said that his country welcomed the fact that proactive investigation space had been retained for 2022, albeit only limited. It was very important especially from the point of view of organizational learning, which the Inspector General had also referenced.

36. Regarding strategic oversight, the Netherlands supported the establishment of an oversight plan for the business transformation programme, requesting more details on what it would entail. Such an important, costly and far-reaching process should also be audited. He looked forward to seeing the audit results in due course, and would appreciate a briefing on that programme for interested Member States.

37. The Netherlands remained appreciative of the focus and leadership role of UNHCR as a whole on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, continuing to underline the importance of a victim-centred approach and the need for a strong focus on disciplinary measures aimed at perpetrators. Was there any analysis of the potential causes of the small decrease in the number of SEA/SH complaints, as others had also mentioned?

38. His country particularly commended the Office's work in relation to integrity matters, welcoming the increased role in retaliation complaints and the additional resources made available for it. He renewed the call on UNHCR leadership to fully support any financial or capacity needs of the Office in general, and on the prevention and investigation of sexual exploitation and abuse in particular: financing and capacity must keep up with caseloads. In closing, he requested further information on the enhancements that the memorandum of understanding with OIOS would bring, especially in light of the reportedly discontinued cooperation with OIOS on evaluations.

39. **Ms. Rasmussen** (Denmark), welcoming the Inspector General's reminder that oversight should not become a footnote in emergencies, said that it was crucial that UNHCR should be transparent and accountable in all aspects of its work to create the confidence required particularly given the high degree of funding provided.

40. Denmark was pleased to see that Office was carefully monitoring the UNHCR business transformation process, strengthening its capacity to analyse those findings, and that engagement with management had been enhanced. She commended the handling of the backlog of cases from 2020 and the very plausible explanation provided for the rise in the number of cases. Her country would follow the case numbers in the years to come.

41. Turning to the important issue of SEAH, she was pleased to see that the Office had worked systematically on gathering lessons learned for management to take further action in that area. Further information would be welcome on the Office's new function in relation to the Ethics Office, as highlighted in the background document. In terms of broader inter-agency approaches, her country welcomed the IASC external review on SEAH. While it had shown commitment and some progress, it had also identified some critical gaps to be filled. UNHCR should continue its active engagement on the matter and work to ensure comprehensive follow-up of the review's recommendations.

42. **Mr. Senders** (Germany), speaking via video link, commending the Inspector General's Office for conducting their work despite the COVID-19 pandemic, said that while his country appreciated the Office's efficiency and effectiveness, it must be adequately resourced. That would be crucial in view of the extended NGO mandate of handling retaliation complaints and for it to proactively analyse risks and show adequate learning from past cases and work with second-line risk management to mitigate risks before they materialized.

43. Open communication on preventing, protecting and responding to fraud, corruption, and sexual misconduct was crucial, and Germany appreciated the quarterly integrity briefings as an opportunity for exchange in that regard. His country welcomed efforts towards more proactive communication around cases, while acknowledging the need to safeguard the confidentiality of ongoing investigations.

44. **Mr. Boutadghart** (Morocco), speaking via video link on behalf of the Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment (GOFESH), said that the Group, a Member State-led platform, aimed to spur discussions and coordinate actions in different multilateral agencies and organizations in Geneva to work towards the elimination of sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH), and to support ongoing efforts by international organizations, agencies and programmes in Geneva in that regard. It sought to promote awareness, prompt policies and frameworks, and support effective follow-up throughout the United Nations system through collective activities including events, advocacy and collaboration among stakeholders. He invited other Member States to join the Group to work together towards the eradication of SEAH.

45. UNHCR was one of the biggest and most operational United Nations agencies, with thousands of staff members and affiliated work forces, mostly in the field. The nature of their work, in constant contact with people in vulnerable situations, and in difficult environments, required enhanced attention so as to prevent sexual misconduct. With that in mind, the Group supported the High Commissioner's strong stance that sexual misconduct was unjustifiable and must be eradicated from the operations of the Organization.

46. He thanked the Inspector General's Office for the oral update including activities for investigating cases of sexual misconduct implicating both UNHCR and partner personnel. The Office played a key role in preventing sexual misconduct and providing accountability. The Group welcomed the efforts so far to improve risk management and accountability, promote responsibility and procedural compliance, as well as prevent and respond to misconduct, including sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment. In that regard, the Group reiterated that UNHCR's Policy on Independent Oversight was mandatory for all UNHCR personnel, partners and other parties with whom UNHCR had a contractual arrangement.

47. UNHCR should expand and improve the programme for registering persons of concern, since registration – a key protection tool – helped strengthen the integrity of operations by preventing and combating fraud, crime and the misuse of power, including human trafficking, thereby effectively preventing the occurrence of SEAH by addressing its root causes.

48. The Group noted that for 2021, 150 complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as 52 complaints of sexual harassment had been received by the Office, while nearly 160 investigations had been finalized, an increase of 22 per cent compared to 2020. The Group understood that with an increase of awareness of existing mechanisms and stronger trust in the organization's responses, an increase in reported cases was a necessary development that could lead to an increase in cases.

49. He urged UNHCR to continue ensuring appropriate disciplinary action where allegations were raised. The prompt investigation of all reported cases of SEAH was vital, maintaining a victim and survivor-centred approach guided by respect for human rights and a gender perspective.

50. The Group welcomed the Office's new role on gathering facts during the preliminary review stage of assessing retaliation complaints.

51. The Group also appreciated the leadership of Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees on addressing sexual harassment. He called on UNHCR to continue to conduct training and awareness-raising on sexual misconduct and keep up with its organizational culture change efforts. Moreover, UNHCR should continue its strong interagency engagement, and appeal to all United Nations organizations to develop a joint approach on protection from SEAH, including on investigations. As

mentioned previously, UNHCR should engage further with the ExCom Member States and keep them fully and regularly informed of UNHCR efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

52. The Group appreciated UNHCR personnel's tireless work in very difficult environments and at personal risks; he assured them that GOFESH Member States continued to stand by them, to help to ensure that all personnel, their partners and those they cared for coexisted in dignity and complete safety from any kind of sexual misconduct.

53. **Mr. Garnett** (Inspector General) said that his office took sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) very seriously. The applicable reporting mechanism had been designed so that any report of sexual misconduct triggered an internal investigation. Responding to comments on SEA and SH figures, he cautioned that as the investigation data was only a small subset of the problem, it was difficult to interpret any trends from such small numbers. What had become clear from benchmarking work conducted with investigations teams across the United Nations system was that UNHCR undoubtedly had the highest number of complaints and active cases, particularly around misconduct. Rather than necessarily reflecting a cultural problem within the organization, that fact demonstrated the level of trust in the system and the very strong championship of reporting sexual misconduct of any kind. There was no place for such misconduct or its perpetrators within the organization, and robust sanctions would be applied. While SH cases were easier to substantiate, partly because they were internal to the organization, external or partly external SEA cases continued to prove challenging. Although there were no discernible SEA trends in 2022, a number of cases were under investigation. UNHCR had adopted the victim-centred approach in 202, and had received training from the French gendarmerie, applying the lessons learned with prevention and victim support colleagues. All victims were automatically referred to support.

54. Turning to changes in the operation of the Inspector General's Office, he said that in the interest of efficiency his office would now be undertaking fact-finding for the prima facie phase of investigations, on behalf of the Ethics Office. The minor changes to procedure, which came at a marginal cost to his office, had the benefit of separating the factual judgement from the determination judgement, which would still be undertaken by the Ethics Office, and thus professionalizing the intake of judgements, whose content and quality would remain unaffected.

55. The existing memorandum of understanding between the Inspector General's Office and the Office of Internal Oversight Services was due for renewal, which presented a timely opportunity to review the latter's role within the broader oversight landscape. An agile and principles-based framework was essential for UNHCR, which had to make complex judgements and was becoming more risk-based and less compliance-based. The task ahead therefore lay in determining the form that oversight should take in the shift towards decentralized accountability. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was also involved in auditing the governance of the Business Transformation Programme, which ran alongside a project-by-project review by the Strategic Oversight Service. Depending on the risk profile and challenges identified, a further programme of work might be needed in certain areas later in 2022.

56. With regard to staffing levels, his office would be considering its balance of resources as part of a two-year planning process in the transition to the COMPASS framework. It had a total of 27 staff, 50 per cent of whom were based in the regions they served. Lastly, his office had strengthened training for implementing partners. Colleagues from the Division of Strategic Planning and Results, through the Implementation Management and Assurance Service, were considering a broader control framework for partners. As part of the oversight component, his office would determine whether the new project reporting, oversight and monitoring system could deliver the right oversight tools and information for ensuring that partner oversight was efficient and effective. Most partners engaged well and were building their investigative capacities.

57. **Ms. Clements** (Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees), noting that UNHCR had participated actively in the recent External Review of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, said that the organization continued to attach great importance to action and prevention in tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Having already implemented best practice, such as by establishing Victim Care Officers, it was sharing its collective experience with other agencies, reflecting on lessons learned and trialling new tools to encourage victims to come forward. While

the organization had therefore built a strong collective foundation with other agencies, it would seek to consult further with members on certain issues.

58. **Mr. Malmquist** (Head of the Investigation Service) noted that most SEA complaints pertained to implementing partner staff. UNHCR referred complaints back to those partners and scrutinized their investigations and approaches, while also reserving the right to launch its own investigations if partners lacked the proper investigative capacity. In that context, it had trained 500 implementing partner staff in conducting misconduct investigations, including SEA investigations. While the Investigation Service remained fully staffed, recruiting experienced investigators from diverse backgrounds remained a challenge across the United Nations system and among NGOs. Having established a strategy to that end, UNHCR had improved its staff diversity.

International protection

59. **Ms. Triggs** (Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees) thanked Finland and Australia for their strong and continued advocacy of the protection needs of people with disabilities, which remained a priority for UNHCR. Turning to the preparations for the forthcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, she said that many Member States had repeatedly underscored the importance of examining root causes of displacement and prioritizing development work, underpinned by the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and led by the High Commissioner. In that connection, she proposed focusing on the area of development cooperation to support protection, inclusion and solutions. At the preliminary stage, UNHCR welcomed feedback from Member States.

60. Working more closely with development alongside work on humanitarian and emergency response was very promising, and required concerted efforts. Development actors played a vital role in displacement settings, as recognized in the global compact on refugees, which reaffirmed their role as part of multi-stakeholder and partnership approaches. Several pledges had been made at the previous Global Refugee Forum to advance cooperation in displacement contexts, and the upcoming dialogue presented an opportunity to build further pledges and initiatives at the Global Refugee Forum in 2023. Many key actors played a role in enhancing development cooperation: multilateral development banks, bilateral development agencies, international financial institutions, the United Nations and other international organizations, parliamentarians, scholars, local mayors, authorities, civil society, refugee-led organizations and, critically, the private sector. Many donor governments had also put displacement on the agendas of their development agencies, while many major host governments had included displacement considerations in their national development planning.

61. UNHCR had been actively involved in efforts to align more closely with development work. The High Commissioner had recently outlined the organization's strategic directions for 2022–2026, which included mainstreaming development engagement. The High-Level Officials Meeting, convened in December 2021, had taken stock of the progress achieved in relation to the Global Compact on Refugee objectives, strengthened by Member States' vision of closer development cooperation and reaffirmed by the Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report 2021. Lastly, the Evaluation of UNHCR's Engagement in Humanitarian-Development Cooperation had set out key recommendations, which could form the basis of programmes. The objective of the dialogue will be to put forth some recommendations and to advance initiatives at the global, regional and national levels. We'll do this with a series of virtual and maybe even personal roundtables. They will discuss common questions which will stimulate work itself on the dialogue on 7-8 Dec. This is an exciting opportunity to build on the experiences you have, what we're gaining and see how we can advance this very critical work. Please give your feedback, suggestions, ideas, lessons learned from other roundtables we've held but also how we can develop new pledges and new initiatives at this dialogue that will enable us to bring those ideas for the Global Refugee Forum in 2023

62. **Mr. Ahmad** (Chad on behalf of African Group), speaking via video link on behalf of the African Group, welcomed the discussion on the externalization of international protection, which departed from the objectives of shared responsibility in the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as the principle of cooperation underpinning international refugee law. Like UNHCR, the Group supported a global approach to protection and crisis solutions, and especially one that supported host countries, prioritized the protection and independence of refugees, employed protection as a resettlement tool and was aimed at creating favourable conditions for voluntary return.

63. African countries had made significant progress in establishing favourable legal and political conditions for protection and inclusion, including by implementing relevant legal instruments to protect refugees, IDPs and stateless persons. The Group noted with appreciation the adoption of new and innovative approaches to determine refugee status during the pandemic, as well as UNHCR's call for enhanced international cooperation and solidarity to allow developing countries to develop and implement similar measures.

64. The inequitable deployment and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines had been one of the gravest failings in the global response to the pandemic, which had impacted States disproportionately and had serious repercussions for human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, the Group welcomed the close coordination between UNHCR, national agencies and other stakeholders to include IDPs in national vaccination plans, in accordance with COVAX allocation principles.

65. Despite the encouraging commitments made during the first Global Refugee Forum, the burden of responsibility for providing international protection to IDPs, stateless persons and supporting host communities had continued to grow since the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees. The African Group therefore called on all stakeholders to take all steps to ensure that a spirit of responsibility- sharing and solidarity prevailed.

66. The firm political commitment of African countries to achieve durable solutions would not be possible without sufficient resources. While grateful to its generous donors for their invaluable support, the African Group called on the international community to guarantee sufficient and flexible financing for UNHCR's operations in Africa.

67. **Ms. Nelson** (United Kingdom) said that humanitarian needs had reached their highest level since World War II, aggravated by climate change and failures in conflict and disaster prevention. Her country was committing to providing humanitarian assistance to those most in need and enhancing their resilience to crises, including through improved humanitarian, development, climate and peacebuilding coordination. Humanitarian and development actors must work together to prevent crises and deliver solutions, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

68. Given the humanitarian system's increasing failure to meet the needs of long-term displaced populations, the United Kingdom welcomed the shift to more sustainable approaches to meet the needs of all displaced people, host communities and other affected populations, including through development approaches and non-aid instruments which were flexible, spanned several years and were aimed at durable solutions. As set out in the Grand Bargain, a joint, impartial and comprehensive needs assessment of crisis-affected populations was required to assess needs more effectively, rather than establishing vulnerability based on status. Such an approach would enable organizations to scrutinize whether they were supporting the right people in the right way.

69. The response to IDPs was part of a better development response to protracted crises more broadly, requiring better planning, anticipation, flexibility, long-term strategies and support, and stronger evidence. IDPs must not have to wait until a crisis was fully resolved before being able to rebuild their lives. The establishment of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement in 2019 had presented a critical opportunity to galvanize political and operational attention and action on the challenges of internal displacement. The United Kingdom remained committed to providing principled humanitarian assistance in moments of crisis, while remaining acutely aware that the response to international displacement was as much a political and development challenge as a humanitarian one. In that context, she welcomed the findings of the panel's report in September 2021 and questioned how the upcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue would capitalize on the Panel's work and findings.

70. **Mr. Lacroix** (France) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and various conflicts were paralyzing development, particularly in Africa. France therefore looked forward to co-chairing with Senegal the upcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development, which would prioritize the protection of IDPs, ensure their representation in development programmes and thus provide them with the appropriate services. France will also participate actively in roundtable discussions on next HC dialogue on protection challenges.

71. **Mr. Banzet** (Canada), noting with grave concern the unprecedented levels of forced displacement worldwide, said that his country was grateful to the frontline States that had

demonstrated their preparedness and willingness to meet the humanitarian needs of those seeking safety and protection. The ongoing situation was a clear reminder that as global forced displacement increased, so too did the required level of response. Recalling the topic of the 8th High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, he proposed that a further exchange of views on preventing, addressing and resolving root causes would be welcome, particularly as that topic had been raised in the High Commissioner's remarks in the proposed framework for 2023. Meaningful engagement on that topic was an important part of pursuing more durable solutions. In that context, UNHCR played a critical role as guardian of the 1951 Convention, which remained the guiding regime for the group's work.

72. **Mr. Smith** (United States) said that the mass displacement crisis in Ukraine and solidarity expressed for those fleeing the conflict served as a timely reminder of the five core protection issues present across every displacement crisis worldwide.

73. First, all States must respect the human rights of all persons fleeing conflict and violence. His country commended the many States respecting the principle of non-refoulement, granting access to asylum and other forms of international protection, and identifying the protection needs of individuals in extreme vulnerability. UNHCR, for its part, played an important role in supporting Member States to build asylum capacity and strengthen border processing procedures.

74. Second, all parties to armed conflicts must protect civilians and allow full and safe humanitarian access to those in need of assistance. On countless occasions, UNHCR staff and other humanitarian workers had demonstrated their courage and dedication in "stay and deliver" in insecure areas where civilian lives depended on the adherence of armed groups to international humanitarian law. In January 2022, the United States military had completed an action plan to improve its approach to civilian harm mitigation and response, driving home the lesson that that protecting civilians was the responsibility of all leaders throughout the Department of Defense, as well as commanders and personnel in the field.

75. Third, efforts to maintain or restore family unity and highlight the protection needs of unaccompanied and separated children, women and single-headed households, LGBTIQ+ individuals, older persons, and persons with disabilities must be supported. His country had long championed efforts to combat gender-based violence, and called for prevention and response to be prioritized before any humanitarian intervention. Moreover, all humanitarian partners must take steps to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, given the importance of countering human trafficking in humanitarian crises.

76. Fourth, registration and documentation remained a crucial step in identifying protection needs. Universal birth registration and other forms of civil registration were crucial in helping populations of concern access essential services, including education and health-care, restore family links and claim their legal identity. In that context, he noted that his country had committed to improving its protection of stateless persons at the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021 by establishing a process for statelessness determinations. Appreciative of UNHCR's technical support for that process, the United States called on other Member States to fulfil their own protection pledges.

77. Lastly, all Governments and communities around the world must extend their solidarity with all refugees fleeing Ukraine regardless of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, or political opinion, in accordance with international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian principles. Given his country's history of civil rights struggles, he commended Member States on striving for inclusive policies with humility, sensitivity, and accountability.

78. **Ms. Moussa** (Egypt), speaking via video link, welcomed the proposed focus on development and cooperation in the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges to address the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. She recognized the need for further engagement with the discussions of the High-Level Officials Meeting in order to analyse reports presented by civil society and donors, particularly the OECD refugee financing survey, and to compare assistance with growing needs. She also welcomed discussions on practical measures to scale up both humanitarian and development funding and to facilitate more equitable burden- and responsibility- sharing.

79. **Ms. Dimitriadou** (World Bank), speaking via video link, said that she was deeply shocked and saddened by the human and economic toll of the war in Ukraine. In response, the World Bank was preparing a \$3 billion package to support the country and other neighbouring host countries.

80. A \$489 million supplementary support package for Ukraine had been approved on 7 March 2022, which included a \$350 million supplementary loan, guarantees, grant financing and parallel financing, amounting to \$723 million in overall mobilized support. The fast-disbursing support would help the Government to provide critical services to Ukrainians, including wages for hospital workers, pensions for the elderly, and social programmes for the vulnerable.

81. Host countries continued to shoulder the burden of caring for refugees, including those opening their borders to Ukrainians. The World Bank was committed to supporting their efforts and to working towards more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing. It would continue to support the Global Concessional Financing Facility for middle-income countries and the Window for Host Communities and Refugees in low-income countries.

82. Welcoming the topic of the forthcoming High Commissioner's Dialogue, she said that in such challenging times all Member States must support implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and honour the commitments made at the previous Global Refugee Forum. The coming months would present an opportunity to take stock of progress and build on the Global Compact on Refugees Indicator Report, particularly in areas such as data and evidence, prevention and preparedness, supporting inclusion in national systems, economic opportunities, leveraging private-sector expertise and business operations, finding solutions in protracted situations and enhancing humanitarian, development and peace effectiveness. The High Commissioner's Dialogue would present an opportunity to rethink approaches and cooperation ahead of the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum, deepen engagement across the international community and strengthen policies and programmes to achieve better development cooperation and outcomes for refugees and host communities.

83. **Ms Triggs** (Assistant High Commissioner for Protection), responding to questions from the floor, recalled that the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was the critical document that guided the work of UNHCR. The Global Compact on Refugees further developed some of its key legal obligations. It was important to remember why the principles first outlined 70 years ago continued to be so relevant. It was also useful to recall the fundamental principles of refugee and international humanitarian law, including non-refoulement, protecting civilians and ensuring access to assistance. She welcomed the action plan from the United States to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers. With regard to families, she noted that it was evident in news from Ukraine that children were a high proportion of those finding their way to safety. It was important to safeguard the principles of solidarity and non-discrimination.

84. The indicator report for the Global Compact on Refugees had been crucial to the High-Level Officials Meeting held in December 2021, since it provided evidence of the extent to which the fundamental principle of equitable burden-sharing and responsibility-sharing was being met in practice. Significant progress had been made, and although the COVID-19 pandemic had had an impact on the implementation of pledges, momentum was being maintained. Nonetheless, it was clear that much remained to be done. The report had also underscored the many contexts in which equitable burden-sharing had not been achieved, for example with regard to access to vaccines. In the context of the pandemic, digital techniques had been employed, particularly in Africa, to ensure access to asylum processes, and UNHCR was working with many countries to support efforts to improve their asylum practices and keep the borders open for those in need of international protection.

85. The work of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement would inform the preparations for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, providing a useful guide on how to address the underlying causes of internal displacement. Movement towards more foundational development work, alongside continuing humanitarian assistance, was very significant. UNHCR had been working very productively on some remarkable initiatives with the World Bank in recent years, and it would be good to see the relationship develop further.

86. **Ms Ali** (Head of the Global Refugee Forum Coordination Team), speaking via video link, said that suggestions would be welcome with regard to which key issues to focus on in preparation

for the Dialogue. Her team was still in the early planning stages and would use the opportunity to build on learning from the evaluations, recent reports, the findings of the High-Level Panel and the work done on the Refugee Policy Review Framework. Hopefully, the conversation would be driven by learning from specific refugee situations – ideally those that included elements of inclusion and return, as well as those involving refugees, IDPs and stateless persons – and round table discussions would be held in the lead-up to the Dialogue to focus on those. Efforts would be made to understand what the issues were, what was working and what the roadblocks were, in order to develop recommendations and initiatives going forward.

Coordination

87. **Ms Hyde** (Director of the Division of External Relations, UNHCR), accompanied by a slide presentation, introduced a paper on strategic partnerships and coordination (including United Nations reform) (EC/73/SC/CRP.6). UNHCR's partnership strategy was guided by placing people forced to flee at the centre of the response and supporting governments. In 2021, in the context of an unprecedented number of complex humanitarian emergencies, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and by climate change, UNHCR had continued to pursue diversified partnerships in order to advance localization, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and United Nations development system reform.

88. UNHCR also continued to lead and participate in a number of inter-agency initiatives, with a particular focus on those likely to have the most impact, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Results Group on Accountability and Inclusion and the Sub-group on Localization. The Office was also a facilitator in the Grand Bargain 2.0, engaged with the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and contributed to the United Nations Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda.

89. Since UNHCR was increasingly working in protracted displacement settings, the nature of its partnerships had shifted to ensure a more appropriate operational response. One example was its partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children. Another was the Joint Programme and Excellence Targeting Hub with the World Food Programme (WFP).

90. UNHCR could not do its work without the more than 900 civil society partners to which it disbursed approximately USD 1.26 billion. That engagement was not purely transactional, however, and the Office was proud to have shifted towards much more meaningful engagement with local actors, refugee-led, women-led and faith-based organizations, for example. In 2021, a simplified agreement had been piloted for organizations led by refugees and other persons of concern, allowing direct funding without intermediaries for the first time, which was proving to be a success.

91. Sporting partnerships provided opportunities to reach new audiences, combat xenophobia and racism, and raise awareness about the positive contributions of refugees to society. For instance, UNHCR's work with the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees and the Olympic Refugee Foundation during the 2020 Tokyo Games (held in 2021) had generated tremendous amounts of coverage of the refugee cause. UNHCR would never be a sports organization, but it did want to ensure that refugees had access to sport and to reach new audiences.

92. UNHCR had invested enormously in the reform of the United Nations development system, and was fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and humanitarian-development collaboration. One example of progress was that 86 per cent of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in refugee-hosting countries had mentioned refugees in their outcome statements, compared to just 60 per cent two years before. The Office's engagement with international financial institutions had resulted in large amounts of money being allocated to refugee-hosting countries through development funds. In 2021, its partnership with the World Bank Group had been strengthened, as well as that with regional multilateral development banks.

93. UNHCR's leading coordination role in refugee contexts had been clearly illustrated in the context of the crisis in Ukraine. The regional response plan for refugees from Ukraine had been swiftly launched just a week after the military action began, working with 11 United Nations and non-governmental organization partners. Seven regional refugee response plans had been issued in 2021, covering 40 refugee-hosting countries. Engagement had also been stepped up in situations of internal displacement in recent years, with heavy reliance on inter-agency initiatives.

94. **Mr. Mudyawabikwa** (Zimbabwe), speaking on behalf of the Africa Group, requested more information about the positive results of the reform of United Nations development system, and the Resident Coordinator system in particular. It would also be useful to know whether the Office was encountering any challenges in that regard. The Africa Group appreciated the additional funding that had been received as a result of the Office's engagement and collaboration with international financial institutions and regional multilateral development banks, but stressed the need to ensure that no additional burden was created for refugee host countries. In respect of the coordination of the refugee response and in situations of internal displacement, the Group urged the Office to work closely with regional economic communities and inter-governmental organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the East and Horn of Africa, especially in planning for the mitigation of climate-change-induced internal displacement and movement of people across borders.

95. **Ms. Lehoux** (Switzerland) welcomed UNHCR's efforts to strengthen its partnerships with key actors, including with regional and multilateral development banks. Such partnerships were essential to the fulfilment of its mandate of protection and assistance. UNHCR's work in relation to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement was also welcome, including its participation in the Steering Group for the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Effective cooperation between the relevant agencies, through the resident coordinators' offices, would be essential in that regard. Lastly, she welcomed the Office's efforts to work within the nexus approach, which was crucial to the development of durable solutions.

96. **Mr. Olfato** (Philippines) said that the Philippines supported continued partnership and close coordination with other United Nations and international bodies, with a view to increasing efficiency and reducing redundancies. There should be more inter-agency collaboration on the issue of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. The Platform on Disaster Displacement, for instance, with whom UNHCR had ongoing links, had been important in highlighting the issue. Focusing on localization could be a way to bring together national and local actors at the forefront of humanitarian response. Experience in the Philippines had shown the value of such programmes, learning from the coordination of responses at all levels. There would be new requirements for due diligence, transparency and accountability, and new modalities for resource management on the part of donors, but the approach had the potential to leverage local communities, and the right balance should be found.

97. **Ms. Jahren** (Norway) welcomed the progress that had been made to strengthen strategic partnerships, including with local responders and refugee-led organizations. Localization was a priority. Norway was committed to the Grand Bargain and good humanitarian donorship and was providing flexible, unearmarked funding, transferred early in the year. Enhanced focus on the participation of refugees and IDPs was commendable. He also welcomed the new partnerships that would provide opportunities to reach new audiences, combat xenophobia and raise awareness of the positive contributions of refugees. Norway recognized UNHCR's contributions to the draft Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, following on from the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, and would support United Nations agencies in following it up.

98. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) welcomed UNHCR's partnerships and coordination with diverse humanitarian and development partners and with populations of concern, which were more important than ever in the context of increasingly broad and complex crises. Its leadership of reform efforts such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Results Group on Accountability and Inclusion was also commendable. Collaboration with development partners was critical to advancing the objectives of the global compact on refugees. The UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children was a good example of how such collaboration could deliver concrete outcomes. The global compact on refugees had also provided a framework for a continued relationship with the World Bank. Input from UNHCR had resulted in stronger, more refugee-centred World Bank responses, such as the Window for Host Communities and Refugees, under the 19th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA19), and the Global Concessional Financing Facility. In particular, its contribution to the Refugee Policy Review Framework would result in more informed policy dialogue.

99. The Office's engagement with the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and work on the Steering Group of the Action Agenda was also noted. Hopefully, key United Nations entities would recommit to improving protection, assistance and solutions for IDPs. The United States

welcomed the recommendation for relevant agencies to develop institutional plans to direct their engagement in durable solutions, and looked forward to hearing how lessons learned from UNHCR's Initiative on Internal Displacement 2020-2021 would inform its plan. However, solutions required more than humanitarian leadership and effort. UNHCR should use its existing relationships with multilateral development banks to foster conversations on how development actors could better support durable solutions.

100. Localization was a key priority, and UNHCR's work to spearhead guidance on the matter within the IASC, reduce administrative burden for local organizations and revise administrative cost structures for local non-governmental organizations was a step in the right direction. Such initiatives should be expanded and ways found to ensure meaningful engagement with those beneficiaries. Ensuring strong coordination of cash and voucher assistance was another priority for the United States, so he welcomed the Office's engagement with the Cash Coordination Caucus. Following the IASC's approval of the plan, UNHCR should work with other stakeholders to stand up the Cash Advisory Group and fully implement the approved model on a reasonable timeline.

101. **Ms. Widstam** (Sweden) commended UNHCR's efforts to diversify partnerships and the focus on inclusion. That was crucial not only for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees but also in mixed movement and IDP situations. It was important to create links with those working for long-term solutions, while also maintaining the focus on meeting humanitarian needs. UNHCR had an important role as a broker between humanitarian and development actors with regard to the provision of basic social services. Efforts to make the recent High-Level Officials Meeting an inclusive opportunity for many stakeholders to contribute and learn from one another were appreciated.

102. She welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General's announcement of the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, and recognized UNHCR as an instrumental part of the Steering Group. Renewed efforts to provide support for protection and durable solutions for IDPs were also welcome, including greater support for resident coordinators. UNHCR had made an important contribution to the reform of the United Nations development system. It would be useful to hear further details of the challenges presented by multiplicity of platforms and coordination arrangements, especially for small offices, and how that could be tackled going forward.

103. UNHCR had a key role to play in supporting the implementation of the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action. Sweden welcomed plans to continue strengthening protection and sharing UNHCR's expertise on the matter. There needed to be increased strong support for the centrality of protection at all levels, and protection clusters should be resourced accordingly.

104. **Ms. Nelson** (United Kingdom) said that effective, transparent and strong partnerships with a variety of actors were more vital than ever. She congratulated UNHCR on its continued success in that regard. She also commended the Office for its ongoing role as a key member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, in particular with regard to extending membership to local and national non-governmental organizations, and for its role in the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and ongoing participation in the Steering Group for the subsequent Action Agenda. She noted the efforts made to push for progress on Grand Bargain commitments and thanked the Office for its role on the Facilitation Group. The United Kingdom supported the United Nations Secretary-General's reform agenda and welcomed the update on UNHCR's engagement with it.

105. **Mr. Van Mens** (Netherlands) said that he supported UNHCR's coordination with United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, including the launch of the response plans, for example for Afghanistan and Ukraine. Such cooperation was important for coherence, prioritization and efficiency. UNHCR's active role in the Steering Group under the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement was appreciated. UNHCR should actively support the leading role of Resident Coordinators, with expertise and capacities to drive work towards sustainable solutions for communities. The work on simplified partnership agreements, and dialogue with NGOs on topics such as localization, was commendable. He asked how such interaction had contributed to shaping UNHCR programmes and how cooperation with civil society was reflected in the meaningful participation of communities in planning and programming. He asked what areas presented themselves for increased partnerships in general, at both policy and operational levels, and how his country could support UNHCR in that regard. He appreciated the reporting on United Nations development system reforms and the UNHCR's role within those. It was hoped that UNHCR's work

in that regard would play a catalysing role for the inclusion of refugee protection within the broader work of the United Nations system and at national levels. UNHCR should continue its work and inform his country how it could further support it. The report on UNHCR's coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ahead of the High-Level Officials Meeting in December 2021 was insightful, and his country looked forward to progress in the near future.

106. **Mr. Ishida** (Japan), expressing his appreciation to UNHCR for its support of the Refugee Olympic Team that participated at the Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020, said that the team had given an outstanding performance and helped to raise public awareness of the issues faced by refugees. Japan looked forward to further opportunities to deepen its relationship with UNHCR.

107. **Mr. Senders** (Germany), speaking via video link, welcomed the stronger focus on protection of internally displaced persons and solutions for situations of internal displacement. UNHCR's leadership within the global protection cluster, in partnership with IOM and the International Committee of the Red Cross, was immensely important to ensure predictable assistance to internally displaced persons. He strongly encouraged UNHCR to strengthen collaboration with relevant agencies in the area of internal displacement, as laid out in the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. UNHCR's coordination role in displacement settings and close partnerships resulting in the "One-UN Approach" was commendable. However, development actors should have a more active role in identifying solutions. His Government stood ready to support the implementation of the Action Agenda once finalized.

108. UNHCR should work closely with relevant agencies in developing institutional plans in order to reach common goals and planning mechanisms. It was crucial to focus on the impact that the proposals within the Action Agenda had on internally displaced persons. As crises grew more complex, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus was increasingly important. UNHCR's adherence to the Development Assistance Committee recommendation in that regard was welcome. He also welcomed UNHCR's stronger engagement with international and regional multilateral development banks to reflect the situation of displaced populations in their policies and to strengthen host communities in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. His Government supported UNHCR's commitment to increase international burden and responsibility-sharing in international fora, such as the Grand Bargain commitments. In that connection, his country was looking forward to working with UNHCR to advance the humanitarian system in areas such as quality funding and cash coordination.

109. **Ms. Rasmussen** (Denmark) welcomed committed efforts to strengthen and catalyse partnerships in coordination with all relevant stakeholders, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. She commended UNHCR's efforts to strengthen its development and peace-building partners to enhance the nexus approach. The cooperation with IOM should be further developed. UNHCR's enhanced cooperation with development banks was encouraging. The cooperation with the World Bank had clearly resulted in benefits for refugees and host communities. She supported the work of the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement to ensure decisions met the needs of persons of concern. She encouraged UNHCR to continue deepening its partnership with the World Bank and other financial institutions.

110. Turning to the issue of localization, she commended UNHCR for meeting its Grand Bargain commitments. Strong partnerships with local partners was key to delivering a response that was people-centred and context-sensitive. In that regard, consultation with refugee-led organizations were of utmost importance. UNHCR's commitment to delivering as "One-UN" was welcome. In order to reach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it was important to leverage the comparative advantages of each agency relating to planning and response systems. Her Government appreciated UNHCR's engagement in relation to the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. Its capacity and expertise in that area, and its continued effort to strengthen a joint United Nations response across humanitarian and development fields, were vital. Her Government also welcomed UNHCR's commitment to Resident Coordinators.

111. **Mr. Lemerle** (European Union group statement) said that the European Union and its Member States appreciated UNHCR's continued efforts to diversify partnerships through strong joint approaches and a clear distribution of tasks, thus maximizing synergies, in alignment with the United Nations' Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda" report. He welcomed the efforts undertaken by UNHCR together with United Nations agencies, the International Red Cross and Red

Crescent Movement and international NGOs to promote the inclusion of refugees in national systems, address protracted internal displacement challenges, encourage vaccine equity and advance gender equality. The UNHCR-UNICEF “Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children” was a tangible result of such cooperation. His group appreciated positive examples from Cameroon, Jordan and Lebanon, where local campaigns led by refugee volunteers had successfully boosted COVID-19 vaccine uptake. He welcomed the partnership with IOM, and strongly encouraged UNHCR and IOM to align their programming and interventions, especially in view of growing mixed migration flows. Within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, his group recognized UNHCR’s crucial role in promoting people-centred and targeted responses, taking into account age, gender, diversity inclusion and localization.

112. UNHCR should strengthen inter-agency collaboration. Its efforts to meet the Grand Bargain commitments were appreciated, and should contribute to simplified partnership agreements, with increased efficiency, transparency, accountability and the implementation of recent agreements on a predictable cash coordination model. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, a true multi-stakeholder approach was essential, as demonstrated by the High-Level Officials Meeting 2021. Ahead of the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, he called on UNHCR to strengthen the work of refugee-led organizations, which should be given a prominent and meaningful role as part of all decision-making processes affecting them.

113. His group supported the implementation of the United Nations development system reform to ensure that the Organization delivered “as one”, especially at field level. His group also welcomed UNHCR’s partnerships with international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and regional multilateral development banks, based on a collective effort and clear allocation of roles, and continued to support the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Centre. A robust coordination framework with protection at the core was crucial, including for refugee support platforms. Following the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, the European Union expected UNHCR to work in close cooperation with other agencies to contribute to the Steering Group for solutions to internal displacement. More support was required for protection and solutions at global and country levels, including for Resident Coordinators.

114. **Ms. Sandlund** (Head of Partnership and Coordination Service, UNHCR) said that the roll-out of measures under the revamped United Nations development system involved lengthy processes. The incorporation of the Common Country Assessments into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, for example, took up to two years. Multiple coordination mechanisms were set up at the regional level, and UNHCR was working closely with United Nations Development Coordination Office to streamline those. In the interests of saving time, she remained open to further questions on a bilateral basis.

Programme budgets and funding (EC/73/SC/CRP.7)

115. **The Chairperson** drew the attention of the Committee to annex X of the update on budgets and funding (2021 and 2022), containing a draft decision on budgets and funding for 2021 and 2022, submitted for adoption.

116. **Ms. Shroff** (Director of Division of Strategic Planning and Results, UNHCR), introducing the update on budgets and funding for 2021 and 2022, said that expenditure figures for 2021 were preliminary, pending the final closure of 2021 accounts at the end of March 2022. The final figures would be reported to the Standing Committee in June 2022. In October 2020, the Executive Committee had approved a revised budget of \$8.6 billion.

117. During 2021, the High Commissioner had established four supplementary budgets to address new needs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the situations in Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Venezuela, which amounted to a combined total of \$631.7 million. Those supplementary budgets had resulted in a revised annual budget for 2021 of \$9.2 billion. That figure constituted the final annual budget for 2021 as at 31 December 2021. Provisional figures for 2021 indicated that funds available exceeded \$5.2 billion, which was a decrease of around 5 per cent compared to 2020.

118. The decrease under the category of other estimated funds and adjustments was due in part to exchange rate fluctuations and the Global Fleet Management’s movement to a separate fund. The overall funding gap in 2021 was estimated at 44 per cent, compared to 41 per cent in 2020, which

had a significant impact on UNHCR's operations. UNHCR had striven to exercise budget conservatism in a year of so many emergencies and growing needs.

119. The carry-over for 2022 was modest, owing to UNHCR's strong implementation rate of funds in 2021, with provisional expenditure for 2021 at \$4.9 billion, which was the highest ever amount. Expenditure had been allocated to various regions, as discussed by the Committee. There had been an increase in the Asia and Pacific region owing to the Afghan situation, and slight decreases in the Middle East and North Africa region due to currency devaluation in Lebanon, and in Europe due to the transfer to Greece of the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme. Global expenditures had also decreased, due to an improvement in allocation to field operations and a reduction in emergency stockpiles. Expenditures at headquarters had increased due to, inter alia, infrastructure spending.

120. Presenting 2021 and 2020 expenditure from the pillar perspective, she said that there had been an investment in internal displacement programmes. As of 8 March 2022, the 2022 budget stood at \$9.8 billion, compared with the original budget of \$8.9 billion. Since then, three supplementary budgets had been approved, including for Ukraine. The results distribution of the budget had remained unchanged.

121. UNHCR's operational context in 2021 had been extremely challenging. While it had responded to more complex displacements and over 40 emergencies, it had maintained a streamlined budget and had worked meticulously to mainstream much of the COVID-19 response into the budget. UNHCR was deeply concerned that certain situations remained critically underfunded, and was striving to meet the growing needs across the world. There was a strain on the unearmarked resources, for which the demand across the Organization was fierce. She urged all participants to show flexibility with regard to unearmarked resources, because the response capacity of UNHCR was dependent on its ability to move resources around.

122. **Ms. Hyde** (Director of Division of External Relations, UNHCR) said that at the end of 2021, UNHCR was 56 per cent funded for 2021, with \$5.1 billion estimated funds available. The total voluntary contributions recorded for 2021 amounted to \$4.6 billion, which was \$100 million less than the income recorded in 2020.

123. She thanked donors for the record amounts of unearmarked contributions that UNHCR had received in 2021. As a share of overall funding, this had been on par with recent years, at 15 per cent. The majority of donor support had originated from governmental donors and the European Union, and was slightly less than in 2020. The United Nations pooled funding and intergovernmental sources stood at 2 per cent. The contributions from private donors amounted to 13 per cent. The total reached an unprecedented amount of \$617 million, of which \$281 million was unearmarked.

124. Contributions from public local funding sources decreased in 2021, partially due to the exceptional funding levels in 2020 of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which she urged States parties to support. Contributions from development sources, however, had risen from \$60 million in 2018 to \$200 million in 2020. Thanks were due to UNHCR's donors, the host countries and UNHCR's largest public sector donors in 2021: the United States of America, Germany, the European Union, Japan, Sweden, Norway, France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Canada.

125. Flexible funding was incredibly important, as it helped UNHCR to quickly respond to crises and support those operations that failed to raise resources because of lack of donor interest. It allowed for prompter preparedness in the face of an emergency, as made evident by the current situation unfolding in Ukraine. Flexible funding also enabled UNHCR to adapt its programmes based on feedback from people of concern, and thus ensure accountability to affected populations. It also allowed for more funding to be channelled to organizations led by refugees and internally displaced persons, including those led by women. She sincerely thanked the donors of flexible funding in 2021. A total of 39 per cent of UNHCR's unearmarked funding had been received from the private sector. The largest governmental contributors of unearmarked funding had been Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Japan, France and Switzerland; while the largest donors of softly earmarked funding had been Germany, the United States and private donors.

126. With regard to public sector funding, 73 per cent had been received by mid 2021, which was an improvement on 2020. Early contributions were critically important to enable UNHCR to plan

and prepare. Regarding diversification, she thanked several of UNHCR's larger donors for significantly increasing their contributions, including France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Austria, Japan and Canada. Early funding helped to offset the decreased funding from several of UNHCR's largest donors and reduce the burden on the top five donors. Regarding private sector funding, \$617 million had been raised in 2021, from individual donors and partnerships. UNHCR's donor base had grown to 2.8 million individual donors, providing strong support for the refugee cause.

127. Turning to the global funding overview for 2022, she said that for the first time, pledges made for 2022 at the Pledging Conference had reached just over \$1 billion, which was an increase on the previous year. However, early pledges did not necessarily mean more pledges. 2022 had started with the launch of three supplementary budgets for Afghanistan, Chad/Cameroon and Ukraine. Support was needed at the global level.

128. UNHCR had invested heavily in innovative financing in the previous two years, generating additional income for its cause from both governments and the private sector. It was a way to diversify and strengthen its funding base, increase unearmarked funding and build new partnerships. There were currently nine active projects, including the Refugee Environmental Protection Fund and the Green Financing Facility. To date, support had been received from Germany and Sweden, and she welcomed other donors to join greening efforts. The Global Islamic Fund for refugees served as another example, being the first endowment fund to support refugee and host community needs. She was happy to provide any further information required. She thanked all donors for their support and generosity.

129. **Mr. Chemakh** (Algeria on behalf of the African Group) thanked the Secretariat for the updates. His Group noted with deep concern the persistent funding gap between the total funds available and the total assessed needs, which amounted to 44 per cent of UNHCR's requirements in 2021, in spite of the rising trend of forced displacement worldwide and the fewer opportunities to return home. The Group was also concerned about the underfunding that affected a number of displaced situations in Africa, with a negative impact on UNHCR's assistance and solutions programmes. African countries continued to receive millions of refugees and other displaced persons, and his group thus reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of equitable and sustainable burden- and responsibility-sharing in solidarity with hosting countries.

130. African host countries should be supported, and be given more opportunities to successfully assist and protect forcibly displaced persons, particularly through durable solutions, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees. In that regard, the African Group commended UNHCR's efforts to secure both traditional and innovative sources of funding for its programmes and activities in 2022. It thanked governments, private sector, individuals and all other donors for the commitment shown during the Pledging Conference. It encouraged donors to continue to respond generously to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources, particularly through unearmarked and softly earmarked funds, to meet the 2022 requirements. The African Group thanked UNHCR for scaling up its response to the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate its impact on persons of concern. A global effort was needed to ensure that refugees and other persons of concern had access, without discrimination, to the vaccine, especially in Africa.

131. **Mr. Smith** (United States of America) expressed appreciation to UNHCR for the thoughtfulness demonstrated in the formulation of the budget. In view of the increase in the budget for 2022, compared to 2021, and the fact that the enormous humanitarian needs resulting from the unprovoked Russian assault on Ukraine had yet to be reflected in the current budget, States parties must seek to address the root causes of displacement while recommitting to ever greater support for the humanitarian system.

132. His Government was proud to have continued its robust support for UNHCR's vital work in 2021. In light of the continuing increase in needs for UNHCR's persons of concern, it was worrisome that UNHCR's funding gap had grown to 44 per cent, reversing progress made in 2020, and that it had entered 2022 with less than half the carry-over it brought into 2021. He strongly urged all donors to do more to share the responsibility and collectively respond to crises worldwide. The contributions of NGOs, foundations and private donors of nearly \$625.3 million in largely unearmarked contributions in 2021 was appreciated. Information on the efforts pursued by UNHCR and States parties to increase contributions and bolster responsibility-sharing would be appreciated.

133. Efficiency, effectiveness and transparency remained important, and UNHCR's efficient and effective use of budget resources, and higher rate of expenditure in 2021 than in 2020, were commendable. The need to efficiently use UNHCR's limited budget resources was even more evident with worsening humanitarian crises worldwide. He urged UNHCR to increase the portion of its budget directed at ending statelessness. As the #IBelong campaign reached its end, funding to statelessness activities was just 0.8 per cent of UNHCR's 2021 budget. It was distressing that that represented a decrease from the already insufficient funding and expenditure levels in 2020. UNHCR should maintain transparency in its budgeting for statelessness activities even as it discontinued the statelessness budget pillar. States parties should prioritize resources for statelessness. His country would continue to follow UNHCR's prioritization of budget resources for statelessness and other protection priorities, such as support to women and girls, children and youth, LGBTIQI+ persons, and internally displaced persons.

134. UNHCR and other United Nations partners should improve economies of scale, reduce management costs and strive to make voluntary contributions stretch further. He commended UNHCR for its implementation of the results-based management system and looked forward to improved reporting to come from the new system. Demonstrating how resources were used, not only for different populations of concern but also to achieve objectives, remained vital.

135. **Mr. Damiani Pellegrini** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking via video link, said that he was concerned that certain countries in his region took advantage of the funding for UNHCR's so-called Venezuela situation. The data in the report showed the considerable resources that had been allocated to the Venezuela situation, in particular a part of the three supplementary budgets announced in 2021. Substantial resources had been allocated to countries in his region within the framework of the transfer from the 2021 operational reserve under the new category of "Venezuelans displaced abroad". His Government would like to know the criteria applied for the distribution of those resources. The report set out the definition of the category of "Venezuelans displaced abroad", which was based on the criteria contained in the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. He emphasized, however, that the Declaration was not a universal document. On the contrary, it was a policy document that was not legally binding. There was no legal basis therein that enabled UNHCR to create a specific national category, different from the regional categories, for persons of concern under its mandate. UNHCR could not base its establishment of new criteria for classification on a regional policy document of such nature. If UNHCR wished to expand its categories beyond those decided by the General Assembly, it should provide grounds for those decisions based on the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. His Government fervently rejected the new category of "Venezuelans displaced abroad", as it was clear that such persons were neither internally displaced nor refugees. UNHCR was not empowered to establish measures for persons that did not fall under its humanitarian assistance mandate, and should allocate its resources to persons that fell clearly under its mandate. It should focus on adequately distributing its resources to confront current challenges, particularly on concrete actions for refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons and returning refugees.

136. **Mr. Lacroix** (France) said that his country supported UNHCR's activities, especially given the unprecedented scale and intensity of humanitarian crises and protection needs, exacerbated by the health crisis and other emerging crises. It was important that UNHCR had a stronger and more flexible budget, to enable it to respect its mandate and participate effectively in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. In 2021, his country had substantially increased its contributions to UNHCR. He welcomed the partnerships between UNHCR and development actors and the private sector, in line with the dynamic adopted within the framework of the humanitarian-development continuum.

137. **Mr. Mindrin** (Russian Federation), thanking the Secretariat for the update, said that there was a need to increase the budget owing to the situation in Afghanistan and Africa. Regarding the 2022 budget, it was important to prepare financial information not only for the impact areas but also with regard to the pillars and the population groups. Such reporting would help States parties to be better informed about UNHCR operations, and would be in line with the 2020 Executive Committee decisions regarding changes to the budgeting format. His country would also appreciate, in subsequent reports, more detailed data on the way in which the 2022 budget changes would impact the financing of the headquarters, regional bureaux and global programmes. It was hoped that the funding deficit could be remedied.

138. **Mr. Van Mens** (Netherlands) said that his Government was still concerned about funding gaps for humanitarian needs, particularly the 44 per cent overall funding gap in 2021. While the effects of humanitarian needs reverberated around the world, the burden lay on the host countries and a very small group of donors. Over the past year, the Netherlands had remained one of the largest donors of unearmarked multi-annual funds to UNHCR, providing 33 million euros a year, in line with the commitments made under the Funding Compact and Grand Bargain. His country would continue to meet that goal. The funds contributed should go as far as possible and it had been shown that multi-year unearmarked funding was the best way to ensure that. Therefore, his country called on every state entity or organization with the capacity to support to do so, and to share the responsibility that belonged to all, as more needed to be done.

139. **Ms. Papka** (Nigeria) acknowledged the leadership of UNHCR and commended the robust engagement of Member States and other partners in their sustained financial commitments to the organization. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had had an impact on many Member States, she nonetheless called for additional partnerships with unearmarked funding, which could deepen the organization's work and enhance its outputs. Collaboration was a key focus of engagement with UNHCR.

140. **Ms. Shroff** (Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results, UNHCR), responding to the questions that had been raised, said that UNHCR's budgets had been steadily increasing in recent years, in response to the growing needs. The budget for West and Central Africa had increased by 14 per cent and that of Southern Africa by 13 per cent. The budget for the East and Horn of Africa had remained stable, although the supplementary budget for the Ethiopia situation had seen an increase. Total funds available also continued to grow. Unearmarked, responsible, reinforced and flexible funding helped the organization respond to crises all over the world, particularly in regions that did not attract large amounts of earmarked funding.

141. It was important to note that although expenditure in 2021 did not show a significant increase in the portion of the budget allocated to addressing statelessness, the planned work had expanded in 2022 and so was likely to go up. In addition, the funds budgeted under pillar 2 were not fully representative of all of the Office's efforts to address statelessness, as that work also included things like providing protection and assistance, ensuring access to information, and advocacy, which were covered under pillars 1 and 4. Efforts were being made to be more precise in articulating the full budgetary contributions to the issue of statelessness.

142. UNHCR had expanded its work inside the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in recent years and was providing direct or indirect assistance for 1.9 million people in 71 communities with shelter, coordination, reception, temporary support and public health. The budget had increased from \$53.7 million in 2020 to \$61.2 million in 2022 and planned expenditures had kept pace, as funds became available.

143. Expenditure had been reported by pillar as well as by impact area and population group, and would continue to be reported that way. Full details on the 2022 budget, including staffing and financing for headquarters and the bureaux, could be found in the document that had been approved by the Executive Committee in 2021. The updates were intended simply to give a sense of strategic shifts during the course of the year.

144. **The Chairperson** took it that the Standing Committee wished to adopt the draft decision on budgets and funding for 2021 and 2022 contained in annex X of document EC/73/SC/CRP.7.

145. *It was so decided.*

Any other business

146. **The Chairperson** recalled that a decision had been taken to have summary records prepared in future of the Standing Committee proceedings, in response to concerns raised by Member States about the need for a more comprehensive, accurate and transparent record of the meetings, reflecting the breadth of viewpoints and comments made. That had previously not been possible, as the length of the reports was limited by the rules governing United Nations documentation. A procedural report of the Standing Committee would be circulated electronically by 24 March for adoption, allowing two weeks for the Committee's review. Member States could submit any amendments by 7 April, which would then be incorporated, as appropriate. The report would then be recirculated and

considered adopted by the silence procedure. Once finalized, the summary records would be posted on UNHCR's governance web page. He thanked the Secretariat for responding to the concerns of Member States and putting in place a new procedure that would mirror that of the plenary session of the Executive Committee.

147. Following an exchange of courtesies, **the Chairperson** declared closed the eighty-third meeting of the Standing Committee of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.