



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
24 November 2022

Original: English

---

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

### Summary record of the 750th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 October 2022, at 10 a.m.

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

*later:* Ms. Stasch ..... (Germany)

## Contents

General debate (*continued*)

---

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**General debate** (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Méndez Escobar** (Mexico) said that, in a challenging international context, simultaneous crises were testing the resilience and response capacities of the multilateral system. While conflict continued to be the main cause of forced displacement, as had been shown by the deplorable humanitarian situation in Ukraine, other factors, such as food insecurity, economic instability and climate change, were increasingly accelerating population movements. Without forward-looking and preventive multilateral solutions, displacement levels would only increase, as would the impact on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), host countries and the international community. In that regard, the Global Compact on Refugees provided a road map for strengthening protection for refugees, fostering cooperation and responsibility-sharing and promoting solutions.

2. Ahead of the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023, Mexico had been working to fulfil the pledges it had made to give effect to the Global Compact on Refugees. First, it had increased the capacities of its institutions to provide international protection. With the fifth highest number of asylum-seekers in the world, Mexico had worked with UNHCR to streamline its registration procedures and adopt simpler tools for determining refugee status, leading to a significant reduction in waiting times. Second, it had continued to promote the inclusion and integration of refugees through inclusive, human-rights based programmes, including an initiative that had enabled 23,000 persons to join the labour market. Third, it had adopted a constitutional amendment to grant Mexican citizenship to children of Mexicans born abroad, thus safeguarding the right to identity and preventing statelessness. Fourth, it had continued to engage in dialogue and responsibility-sharing under the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) and work with countries that made up its Support Platform. Lastly, it had championed a comprehensive development plan for Central America in an effort to address the root causes of displacement. In that regard, the international community must redouble its efforts. Host countries, most of which were in the global South, could not bear the burden alone.

3. **Mr. Zniber** (Morocco), expressing his appreciation for the work of UNHCR, its regional offices and staff, said that it was critical to ensure a balanced and impartial approach to managing refugee flows. The tragedy facing Pakistan was a reminder of the distressing consequences of climate change for populations. Due weight must be given to all humanitarian crises without distinction. More alternative solutions were needed, with priority being given to voluntary returns. Strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus was critical to ensuring that States could offer a proper socioeconomic environment for the durable, permanent integration of returnees.

4. While collective commitments were crucial, so, too, was individual State responsibility. At the national level, action taken by the Moroccan Government in respect of persons of concern to UNHCR included implementing a national strategy on immigration and asylum, the underlying aim of which was to shift from providing financial assistance to refugees to fostering their economic empowerment. An evaluation was also under way to find ways of expanding access to social protection by foreign nationals, including refugees, living in Morocco.

5. Morocco regretted the critical situation faced by those living in the Tindouf camps. The location of the camps, in Algerian territory, and the de facto devolution of authority by the State to an armed separatist group, in flagrant violation of international law, rendered it an unprecedented situation. A State could not delegate its sovereignty, and thus its responsibility, to a non-State actor – and a militia at that. In 2018, the Human Rights Committee had drawn attention to the issue in its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Algeria. Morocco called upon the international community, including donors and organizations, to remind Algeria of its duty to allow UNHCR to conduct a survey of the population in the camp, as had been requested by the Security Council. Without such a survey, it was impossible to assess humanitarian needs in the camp.

6. **Mr. Aala** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that addressing the root causes of the rising waves of displacement and supporting national efforts were prerequisites for creating an enabling environment in countries of origin for the return in safety and dignity of refugees and displaced persons, in accordance with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. Regrettably, the world was dominated by policies and practices that served to stoke further crises. While the funding gap continued to widen, double standards and political considerations prevailed in many donor countries. His delegation supported the High Commissioner's call for increased funding, including unearmarked contributions, to allow UNHCR to respond effectively and without restriction to protracted and emerging refugee situations.

7. The Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Syrian Golan had continued to cause the forced displacement of millions of Palestinians and half a million Syrians. In his country, terrorism backed by foreign States, acts of aggression and occupation, and an economic blockade caused by the imposition of unilateral coercive measures were major factors for the suffering and forced displacement of Syrians. With most areas of the country liberated from terrorism, the Syrian Government was continuing its efforts to restore normal life, rebuild infrastructure, re-establish services and adopt legal and administrative measures to facilitate the return of displaced persons and provide for their basic needs. As a result, around 1 million persons displaced outside the country had been able to return. Precautionary measures taken by host countries during the COVID-19 pandemic had eased the pace of voluntary repatriation.

8. It was regrettable that States and international parties sought to politicize the humanitarian response, justify the imposition of unilateral coercive measures and set conditions for the return of displaced Syrians. His Government thanked UNHCR for its assistance and urged it to play a more effective role in supporting efforts to facilitate the return of displaced Syrians, mobilizing financial resources and working with the countries concerned to enable the lifting of unilateral coercive measures and the depoliticization of the issue of refugee returns. Ensuring rapid progress in the implementation of early recovery projects, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2642 (2022), would contribute to alleviating suffering and accelerating the return of displaced persons and refugees.

9. **Mr. Matulay** (Slovakia) said that, at a time of unprecedented challenges, a record 100 million forcibly displaced persons and increasingly protracted refugee situations, the mandate and role of UNHCR had never been more relevant. To address the situation of displaced persons, the Global Compact on Refugees must be effectively and comprehensively implemented. The Office must also continue its internal reform processes to strengthen its capacity to deliver results. It must also maintain its focus on addressing the drivers of forced displacement and turning the long-term goal of conflict prevention and resolution into reality.

10. Europe was facing a refugee crisis and one of the world's largest displacement crises owing to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. His Government fully supported the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. It was deeply concerned by the growing human cost and suffering caused by the armed conflict, as well as the devastating knock-on effects on the global economy, and deplored the deliberate targeting by the aggressor of innocent civilians.

11. The unprovoked, unjustified and unlawful war against Ukraine by Russia had forcibly displaced one third of the Ukrainian population, with women, children and vulnerable groups accounting for the vast majority. As a neighbouring country, Slovakia had continued to be among those that first received and provided humanitarian assistance to civilians fleeing the violence in Ukraine. Almost 1 million people had crossed the border and 100,000 had registered for temporary protection status in Slovakia. While his country was facing the largest refugee emergency in its history, his delegation wished to express gratitude to UNHCR for its rapid response and strong support. The generous financial support of donors was also much appreciated. His Government stood ready to deepen its collaboration on other issues of mutual concern.

12. Slovakia was equally concerned at the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in other regions, such as in Syria, the Sahel, Venezuela and Myanmar. Protecting, assisting and upholding the rights and dignity of forcibly displaced and stateless persons was

a collective endeavour and a mutual responsibility. Slovakia was determined to continue doing its utmost to contribute.

13. **Mr. Da Silva Nunes** (Brazil) said that, in the face of mounting displacement and an unstable international context, cooperation and solidarity were key to sustained and comprehensive humanitarian responses. Such responses were needed to address the lingering social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which continued to have a devastating impact on refugees and other vulnerable groups.

14. In Brazil, cooperation and solidarity were the cornerstones of its Operation Welcome task force, which had so far provided assistance to 770,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees. Of that figure, 375,000 Venezuelans had decided to stay in Brazil, where they benefited from full access to public services, employment, social benefits and health care, including mental health and psychosocial support. In addition, the voluntary relocation of 80,000 migrants and refugees to 870 Brazilian cities, where there were better opportunities for employment and social integration, had been facilitated. Brazil had also granted protection to Afghans and Ukrainians through its humanitarian visa policy.

15. While the Government's humanitarian response had been well established, it was not fully sustainable. Mobilizing domestic and international resources from different stakeholders was critical for his country to be able to continue to show its solidarity with its Venezuelan brothers and sisters. Since 2018, more than 6 million Venezuelans had left their country. In response, an informal coordination mechanism, the Quito Process on the Human Mobility of Venezuelan Nationals in the Region, had been set up to coordinate initiatives and share best practices. Having assumed the pro tempore presidency of the Quito Process on the Human Mobility of Venezuelan Nationals in the Region, Brazil had focused on strengthening partnerships, not only between countries facing a common challenge, but also between Governments, civil society and international organizations working towards the same goal.

16. It should be stressed that all actions must be aimed at ensuring that the most vulnerable groups, including women, girls and persons with disabilities, were safeguarded, including by respecting their human rights and rejecting any forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or other forms of intolerance.

17. **Mr. Lee Taeho** (Republic of Korea) said that the world was once again witnessing an unprecedented humanitarian situation: the number of forcibly displaced persons, including those fleeing the Russian illegal invasion of Ukraine, had surpassed 100 million for the first time since the Second World War. His delegation believed that, with greater political will and strengthened joint efforts, the situation could be turned around if efforts were geared towards three specific aspects.

18. First, measures were needed to ensure stable funding and expand the funding base. The private sector played an important role in providing diversified and flexible funding, ensuring resource mobilization and galvanizing political support for more flexible contributions from donor countries. Second, a greater focus on durable solutions to address the root causes of displacement was required. Development was the key to facilitating return, reintegration and resettlement processes; UNHCR must strengthen cooperation with other partners and experts in development to form a humanitarian-development nexus. Third, effective and efficient delivery was critical in situations of limited resources. The Office should continue to make progress on its internal reforms, with UNHCR staff placed at the centre. In that connection, his delegation hoped that the Executive Committee's conclusions on mental health and psychosocial support would have a positive impact on the safety and well-being of those on the ground. It also encouraged UNHCR to ensure balance and diversity among its staff.

19. A worrying trend was the growing number of pushbacks at the borders; they almost amounted to a denial of the right to seek asylum. The key principles of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees must be upheld and the equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing of the Global Compact on Refugees acknowledged. His Government looked forward to the second Global Refugee Forum, which would serve as an opportunity to reaffirm commitments and strengthen political will.

20. **Mr. Cornado** (Italy) said that, since the Executive Committee's seventy-second session, the global humanitarian situation had further deteriorated owing to the unjustified and unprovoked Russian attack on Ukraine, bringing war and forced displacement to the heart of Europe. The number of persons displaced by war and violence, food insecurity, the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme weather events was growing at an alarming pace. Complex and multi-layered humanitarian crises had further aggravated the fragilities of those in highly vulnerable situations, in particular persons of concern.

21. In such exceptional circumstances, Italy had responded by demonstrating its solidarity with those in need, doubling its emergency response and promoting stronger collective engagement and humanitarian efforts. As a reflection of its commitment to the Office's humanitarian activities, Italy had doubled its financial contribution to €70 million and had increased its level of flexible funding.

22. The Office's humanitarian response in Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria and in the central and western Mediterranean remained top priorities for Italy, as did increased support for the situation in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. A joint mission of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and UNHCR had been launched with regard to the refugee crisis in the Horn of Africa. In addition, the Italian Government had continued to implement its resettlement and relocation programmes, transferring an additional number of refugees from Ethiopia and Lebanon through humanitarian corridors, thereby easing pressure on countries of first asylum. It had also further expanded its University Corridors for Refugees Project, providing tertiary education to 70 refugee students in more than 34 academic institutions nationwide.

23. He underscored the critical importance of the Global Compact on Refugees and of burden- and responsibility-sharing. His delegation encouraged UNHCR to further expand its donor base by involving the private sector and relevant international financial institutions. The Italian Government would maintain its active and strong commitment to UNHCR and called upon the international community to step up its efforts to alleviate human suffering, cover the basic needs of persons of concern and keep in mind those who were often unseen, unheard and left behind.

24. **Mr. Majawar** (Yemen) said that, while the Executive Committee was meeting, the Yemeni people were facing an eighth year of daunting challenges and humanitarian suffering, triggered by a war imposed by the Houthi militias, which had recently rejected a truce renewal. The coup had led to the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. Deliveries of humanitarian aid had been blocked and 25 million people were in urgent need of food, medicines and water. The number of internally displaced persons had risen to 5 million, while more than 1 million people were outside the country, most of whom had not gained refugee status in their countries of residence. Winter was fast approaching, and the Houthis' continued war was triggering internal displacement from conflict areas to safe regions and governorates.

25. Between 1 January and 30 September 2022, a total of 40,473 persons had been internally displaced across 11 governorates. Houthi militias had launched indiscriminate attacks on residential areas and camps for internally displaced persons and had blocked, stolen or diverted humanitarian deliveries.

26. Despite the daunting situation in which Yemen found itself, it was committed to international refugee instruments, in particular the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. It had recently granted refugee status to persons fleeing the Horn of Africa and several Arab States and was endeavouring to ensure their protection based on the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing.

27. The Government wished to draw attention to the plight of Yemeni refugees in a number of countries. UNHCR staff had been treating them poorly, issuing them with invalid documents and providing them with meagre financial assistance compared to that given to refugees of other nationalities. Consequently, Yemen called on UNHCR to treat all refugees equally. It highly valued the financial support lent to the humanitarian response plan and hoped that all countries would honour the pledges that they had made in that regard. It called on the international community to assist host countries, find durable solutions and provide

more humanitarian and financial resources to address refugee crises, especially in developing countries.

28. **Mr. Staniulis** (Lithuania) said that the world had changed, not always for the better. Hundreds of millions of refugees had been forced to leave their homes to seek a safe haven in other countries, whose hospitality and generosity were to be commended.

29. The unjustified war waged by the Russian Federation in Ukraine with the assistance of Belarus had caused a humanitarian catastrophe, marked by human pain and suffering not seen in Europe since World War II. Thousands had died and millions had been forced to flee. The war was the result of the imperial ambitions of the Russian Federation, which was seeking to rebuild what had collapsed 30 years previously by expanding its spheres of influence, annexing territories and subjecting other nations to brutal intimidation.

30. However, it had become more difficult to hide crimes, influence perceptions with disinformation and justify actions through erroneous interpretations of international law. In the modern world, everything was seen and captured, from bombing and shelling to people's sorrow. The damage inflicted by the aggression was irreparable. The international community had to help the Ukrainian people and prepare for new flows of refugees as winter approached, while the Russian Federation yet again targeted civilian energy infrastructure through barbaric missile attacks, which Lithuania condemned in the strongest possible terms. Like other democratic countries in the region and worldwide, Lithuania had already done a great deal to assist Ukrainian refugees, having taken in over 67,000 of them. It wished to thank UNHCR for its involvement in that regard.

31. The second Global Refugee Forum would mark an important milestone in assessing the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees. Lithuania invited UNHCR to work with all partners to continue to establish aid programmes and realign priorities. There was a need to ensure respect for the international order and the principles and values on which the United Nations system was based. In the present circumstances, that could be done only by reassessing the responsibilities borne by the Russian Federation in relevant humanitarian forums.

32. **Mr. Sterk** (Bulgaria) said that forced displacement continued to reach record levels in 2022, with hundreds of millions of people fleeing war, persecution and human rights violations. The war in Ukraine had sparked a humanitarian crisis in Europe. Bulgaria wished to reaffirm its solidarity with neighbouring countries and strongly condemned the recent missile strikes by the Russian armed forces on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, which had destroyed civilian infrastructure vital to the survival of the Ukrainian people during the winter period. It applauded the Office's efforts to help Ukrainian refugees and the courage of its staff on the ground.

33. From the beginning of the war up to 3 October 2022, more than 782,000 Ukrainians had entered Bulgaria. Around 138,000 of them had been registered under the Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, known as the Temporary Protection Directive, granting them access to the labour market, medical care, accommodation, social welfare assistance and education. The Government welcomed its bilateral cooperation with UNHCR and acknowledged its contribution to the Blue Dot initiative and the programme of cash assistance for protection.

34. Bulgaria continued to pay attention to situations of concern in other parts of the world and granted asylum without discrimination to individuals eligible for international protection. It was worried about the lack of progress in tackling the root causes of forced displacement in the Middle East and North Africa, particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic.

35. With respect to Asia and the Pacific, it was important to mention the humanitarian and security challenges faced by Afghanistan. Bulgaria would continue to offer its financial and other support to UNHCR in the implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework.

36. African countries continued to grapple with forced displacement due to protracted and escalating conflicts exacerbated by climate change. Bulgaria welcomed the Office's

significant presence throughout Africa and the strengthening of its partnerships with development actors and international financial institutions.

37. Bearing in mind the impact that forced displacement and statelessness could have on mental health, the Executive Committee's proposed conclusions were highly relevant and would hopefully be adopted by consensus. Bulgaria wished to commend UNHCR for its efforts to strengthen its strategic planning and promote risk management and results-based programming. It encouraged the Office to continue to prioritize the needs of vulnerable groups and shared its commitment to combating discrimination and enabling safe access to education. Bulgaria wished to reiterate its commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and looked forward to the second Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

38. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that Slovakia, like many other countries, had played a positive role by receiving Ukrainian refugees. UNHCR had reopened its office in the country at the time of the influx and enjoyed effective cooperation with the national authorities.

39. For a relatively small country, Lithuania had received many Ukrainian refugees. He agreed with the representatives of Lithuania and Bulgaria that the escalation in the war that had been observed over the previous days, coupled with the approach of winter, gave considerable cause for concern.

40. He wished to thank Italy for greatly increasing its financial contribution to UNHCR and for its efforts to promote resettlement, including through creative complementary pathways. The Office was aware of the pressures Italy was under from arrivals along the central Mediterranean route and hoped that relief would be provided through greater European Union solidarity.

41. The representative of Bulgaria had rightly flagged the importance of addressing needs in areas outside Europe and of the Executive Committee's proposed conclusions, whose focus on mental health was particularly apposite at a time of traumatic conflicts.

42. UNHCR would continue to work in Yemen despite the tremendously difficult circumstances. It had enjoyed better access during the truce, which it hoped would be restored as part of discussions conducted through the Special Envoy for Yemen. He noted the remarks made by the representative of Yemen about Yemeni refugees in other countries and wished to assure him that there was no discrimination against them on the part of UNHCR. Nevertheless, the concerns would be investigated.

43. He wished to thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for echoing his call for more unearmarked funding. The Office would continue to engage with the Syrian Government to provide humanitarian assistance and remove obstacles to voluntary repatriation. It appreciated the measures taken by the Government in that regard, in particular the issuance of Legislative Decree No. 7 of 2022 granting a general amnesty for crimes of "terrorism" committed by Syrian citizens.

44. He agreed with the analysis of the global situation given by the representative of Morocco and with the emphasis that he had placed on the need to work with development actors, particularly on climate issues. The Office enjoyed excellent cooperation with the Moroccan authorities and would continue its humanitarian engagement in the Tindouf camps.

45. He was grateful to the Republic of Korea for its growing support in the form of both public and private contributions and for encouraging the Office's internal reform processes. Its private contributions in particular had increased more than those of almost any other country in the world.

46. He recognized the challenges faced by Mexico, including on account of a rise in asylum applications. The response from local and national authorities had been very positive, particularly in terms of promoting inclusion and integration. He agreed with the representative of Mexico on the need for regional solidarity, which could only have been strengthened by the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.

47. Operation Welcome, launched by the Brazilian armed forces in February 2018, was a model of local integration that was being carried out at great cost to the national purse. He had constantly appealed for international solidarity in that regard. He wished to thank Brazil

for its leadership of the Quito Process and for having continued to grant humanitarian visas to people other than Venezuelan citizens.

48. **Mr. Soualem** (Algeria) said that the world was facing a complex humanitarian situation marked by multidimensional challenges that threatened not only human security but also peace and stability. The international community's responses to the number of displaced persons worldwide, which had hit record levels in 2022, remained inadequate, hence the urgent need for even greater mobilization and solidarity.

49. The current global situation required a more equitable and predictable sharing of burdens and responsibilities in order to support the efforts of host countries and communities, particularly developing countries, and enable them to respond in the best possible way to growing humanitarian needs. Those efforts should be accompanied by the implementation of durable solutions that addressed the root causes of displacement, including in protracted situations, and promoted the creation of conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons.

50. The 2023 Global Refugee Forum should afford an opportunity to rethink how the international community dealt with the issue of forced displacement, which had only become more acute in recent years. The task would be to find appropriate, context-based responses that were acceptable to the populations concerned. Algeria welcomed the Office's efforts to mobilize funds and appreciated the generosity of donors. It remained concerned, however, about the widening gap between available resources and the needs of persons of concern.

51. Guided by policies based on the rule of law, respect for legality and solidarity with countries and peoples in need, Algeria had always favoured peaceful resolutions to conflicts, as evidenced by its commitment to the stabilization of the Sahel-Saharan region, its leading role in mediation in Mali, its good offices in Libya and its strong support for the inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence. It should be recalled that, for almost half a century, Algeria had been hosting refugees from the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Western Sahara, who remained victims of the failure to complete the most recent process of decolonization in Africa. Given the vulnerability of those refugees, who lived in one of the most hostile climates on the planet and who depended mainly on humanitarian aid, Algeria was sparing no effort to protect and assist them, including through the implementation of humanitarian programmes.

52. He wished to thank the Office for organizing regular donor visits to the Tindouf camps. The visits not only gave more visibility to the hardship faced by refugees but also reinforced the validity and transparency of the humanitarian operation. Despite those collective efforts, the funds mobilized for Sahrawi refugees remained below their real needs, which had increased as a result of new geopolitical tensions related to the breakdown of the ceasefire between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO.

53. Algeria welcomed the start of discussions with the World Food Programme to review the humanitarian assistance provided to refugees in the camps and wished to reiterate its support for the Office, which was the embodiment of multilateralism and worked tirelessly to find dignified and humane solutions to alleviate human suffering.

54. **Ms. Kapetanović** (Observer for Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that, having experienced a military aggression and war that had forced hundreds of thousands of people of all ethnicities to flee the country, Bosnia and Herzegovina was keenly aware of the reasons for cross-border displacement and had nothing but sympathy for those who had to leave their homes in search of peace and security.

55. The numbers of asylum-seekers and migrants arriving in the country had fallen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such people were accommodated in seven reception centres and were provided with food and non-food items and comprehensive primary and secondary health-care services. The Government was grateful to UNHCR and the European Union for the assistance provided to date, especially in terms of identifying and referring people in need of international protection and ensuring access to free legal aid, psychosocial assistance, accommodation and education for asylum-seekers with specific needs.

56. She wished to express her appreciation to the European Union for launching a project worth €39.5 million to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in managing mixed flows and in



dealing with issues such as irregular migration, border security, asylum, return, migrant smuggling and human trafficking. She also welcomed the cooperation and coordination established between UNHCR and key international partners operating in the country.

57. Bosnia and Herzegovina did its utmost, within its political and constitutional framework, to honour its international protection obligations. In that regard, it strongly supported the Office's work in the country and worldwide and wished the High Commissioner every success in the fulfilment of his mandate.

58. **Mr. Bin Khothaila** (Observer for Saudi Arabia) said that his country shouldered its part of the collective responsibility to improve the lives of refugees across the world, ensure dignified living conditions for all and consolidate peace. To that end, it took measures under various international instruments, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and believed that more needed to be done within the international community to investigate and tackle the root causes of refugee crises.

59. Saudi Arabia was committed to identifying durable solutions and to the maintenance of peace and stability. It strove to share the global refugee caseload and ensure an acceptable standard of living and conditions conducive to voluntary return. It was aware of the socioeconomic and climate challenges behind refugee flows and was working to address the consequences of climate change. In that regard, it had launched an unprecedented initiative to finance green projects and was trying to achieve carbon-neutral status and manage environmental crises that impinged on the well-being of refugees. It was developing several other projects with international partners and had hosted and provided free health care and education to many refugees from countries in conflict.

60. **Mr. Bonnafont** (France) said that the previous year had once again illustrated the major role played by UNHCR in protecting the most vulnerable populations. The proliferation and aggravation of conflicts, the deterioration of food security, natural disasters, the increase in poverty and the widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had spared no one. UNHCR had been present on the ground to provide rapid and effective humanitarian responses, despite complex and precarious conditions. He wished to pay tribute to the dedication of all UNHCR staff, who embodied the United Nations ideal of solidarity. During the High Commissioner's recent visit to Paris, President Macron had reaffirmed the country's commitment to welcoming refugees and taking into account their humanitarian needs.

61. France condemned in the strongest possible terms the war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine, the recent illegal attempts to annex Ukrainian regions, the bombing of civilian targets and the war crimes committed, more of which were being uncovered in liberated areas every day. In response to the human tragedy being played out in Ukraine, it was hosting more than 100,000 Ukrainians and providing education to 20,000 Ukrainian children and students. It would continue to support the Office's efforts to assist millions of displaced Ukrainians, including by protecting them from the combined effects of the war and the winter cold. It was essential to have access to displaced persons in areas of Ukraine under Russian control and to Ukrainian populations in Russia itself.

62. President Macron had stressed that the war in Ukraine should not draw attention away from other crises. France was determined to further increase its development and humanitarian resources and to remain mobilized in respect of other humanitarian emergencies, including in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, as evidenced by the substantial increase in its voluntary contributions to UNHCR.

63. The situations in Ethiopia, the Sahel, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Myanmar and Afghanistan sadly continued to dominate the news and served as reminders of the international community's moral responsibility to protect those who fled persecution. Faced with such challenges, not all States were equal. Fragile socioeconomic balances could suddenly be called into question in host countries that were neither prepared nor supported.

64. Threats to food security and nutrition, which imposed a universal duty of solidarity, had been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and by the military aggression in Ukraine. According to the World Food Programme, 345 million people were at risk. In the face of immense and growing needs, the response had to be rapid and multilateral. France was taking action through the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission, the Save Crops

Operation and the European Commission's Solidarity Lanes. It also supported the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which had been an important success for the United Nations. France participated fully in efforts to help persons of concern, had always shown solidarity with countries in crisis and assumed its share of the collective responsibility to receive and resettle refugees. In 2022, it had renewed its commitment to hosting 5,000 refugees from North Africa and the Middle East.

65. In addition to raising its voluntary contributions, France was striving to honour the resettlement commitments that it had made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum. It offered upstream solutions, in the form of legal channels for admission into the country and durable living arrangements, and downstream solutions through strengthened asylum and reception capacities and access to housing for refugees. In 2021, some 54,000 people had been granted asylum in France, 63 per cent more than in the previous year.

66. France was pleased to be co-sponsoring the 2023 Global Refugee Forum and wished to reiterate its resolve to making the meeting a success by boosting cooperation between humanitarian and development actors and the protection afforded to humanitarian actors in the field. The High Commissioner could count on the support of France for his efforts in that regard.

67. **Ms. Brodská** (Czechia) said that there had been a huge increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons around the world in 2022, largely as a result of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. The war had disrupted supplies of food and fuel, and food insecurity had been exacerbated by climate-related events, placing millions on the brink of famine. The Russian Federation had triggered a humanitarian crisis with many civilian casualties and millions of internally displaced persons and refugees. Furthermore, Russian soldiers were forcibly deporting Ukrainian children. The Russian Federation must immediately start respecting international humanitarian law and allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all persons in need.

68. Czechia hosted over 440,000 Ukrainian refugees, which was the highest proportion per capita in the world and about 4 per cent of the country's population. It welcomed UNHCR support for the creation of additional accommodation capacities. Since the beginning of the Russian war in Ukraine, Czechia had allocated €40 million for humanitarian and stabilization aid. The Government was preparing a special reconstruction programme for Ukraine, which would be developed in a dialogue with its Ukrainian partners.

69. Czechia would continue to provide resources to address other refugee crises around the globe. During the past 12 years, it had provided assistance, in cooperation with UNHCR, amounting to €22.8 million for forcibly displaced persons in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Serbia, Syria and other countries. Czechia had also participated in the Junior Professional Officers programme.

70. **Ms. Pipan** (Slovenia) said that the devastating effects of armed conflicts and the spiralling costs of food and fuel had created unprecedented needs and led to a record number of displaced persons.

71. The unprovoked and unjustified military aggression by Russia against Ukraine grossly violated international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and seriously undermined global security and stability. It had also triggered one of the gravest displacement crises in Europe and had exacerbated the humanitarian situation in other places around the world.

72. Slovenia devoted special attention to vulnerable groups, including refugees and internally displaced persons. It had provided assistance in 2022 for displaced persons from Syria, Afghanistan and Palestine and for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Brazil. It was also implementing humanitarian projects in Uganda and Lebanon and providing comprehensive assistance in cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for refugees and victims of gender-based violence. Faced by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, Slovenia had doubled the funds allocated to NGO projects for the next three years.

73. Slovenia had also focused on assisting refugees and internally displaced persons in Ukraine, Poland, Moldova and its own country by means of contributions to international

organizations, in-kind assistance and bilateral projects. It had welcomed orphans from Ukraine and paid special attention to the integration of refugee children into the education system.

74. It was of the utmost importance to respect international humanitarian law, to address the root causes of migration and to create safe legal pathways for persons requiring protection. Slovenia was pleased to note that special attention would be given to migration caused by climate change at the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

75. **Mr. Ahmad** (Chad) said that the National Commission for the Reception and Reintegration of Refugees and Returnees and the UNHCR office in Chad faced major challenges in providing protection and assistance for more than 1 million displaced persons, including 568,919 refugees, 4,613 asylum-seekers and 381,289 internally displaced persons. In addition, 107,800 persons were returnees from the Central African Republic and Nigeria. Notwithstanding the security challenges, the country had refrained from closing its borders and had shared its meagre resources in 2022 with many thousands of asylum-seekers.

76. Chad had recently launched an inclusive and sovereign national dialogue following the peace agreement reached in Doha with political and military groups.

77. The Asylum Act promulgated on 31 December 2020 was designed to provide better protection for asylum-seekers and refugees. Furthermore, in line with the country's commitments during the high-level segment on statelessness, the Government had promoted the issuance of a large number of birth certificates to refugees and internally displaced persons. It had also allocated additional resources to civil status centres, competent judicial bodies and the National Agency for Secure Documents.

78. A critical situation had arisen from the lack of resources to address the current state of food insecurity and malnutrition. If no additional funds were available, food aid for Sudanese refugees in the east of the country and for central African refugees in the south would end in November and December 2022 respectively. According to the World Food Programme, \$93 million was required for the next six months to assist refugees, internally displaced persons, host communities and flood victims. The alarming situation was exacerbated by the proliferation of terrorist groups in the Lake Chad basin.

79. **Ms. Fuentes** (Chile) said that the South American Conference on Migration was about to meet in plenary in Santiago. Her country, holding the pro tempore presidency, had promoted the slogan "Migration, integration and cooperation: towards a regional migration agenda".

80. Substantial support was provided to local governments through the Cities of Solidarity (Cuidadas Solidarias) Programme for the provision of essential resources to migrants. In addition, an agreement had recently been concluded between UNHCR and the Ministry of Social Development on assistance for people living on the streets, and the authorities also cooperated with the Chilean Red Cross in guaranteeing access for refugees and migrants to high-quality health-care services.

81. Chile hoped that new commitments would be assumed at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum aimed at providing a comprehensive humanitarian response to refugees and asylum-seekers in a world that was increasingly challenging and hostile to the most vulnerable.

82. The Chilean Migration and Aliens Act, which had established the Statelessness Determination Board, contained an article on labour rights and enshrined the principle of family reunification. In addition, an interministerial council had been mandated to draft and adopt a national policy on migration and aliens within six months. The President gave high priority to such a policy with a view to guaranteeing the rights and promoting the integration of migrants and refugees. Various sectors of society would also be invited to express their opinions on migration.

83. Chile reiterated its commitment to promoting initiatives at the national, regional and multilateral levels based on the principles of shared responsibility and international solidarity.

84. **Ms. Filipenko** (Observer for Ukraine) said that the full-scale armed aggression by Russia against Ukraine had caused one of the world's largest displacement crises. Some 14 million Ukrainians, a third of the population, had been uprooted. About 6.2 million had been internally displaced and more than 7.5 million had sought safety abroad.

85. Russia had systematically violated international humanitarian and human rights law. Ukraine was currently mourning the victims of horrendous missile attacks on the city of Zaporizhzhia on 9 October, which had left more than 100 civilians dead and wounded, including 12 children. On the following day, the Russian Federation had hit Kyiv and 12 other regions with 87 cruise missiles, damaging residential buildings, universities, museums and diplomatic missions. At least 19 people had been killed and 105 had been injured. As a result, 15 regions of Ukraine had been deprived of electricity, heating and water, and about 18 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. It was essential to halt the genocidal war and to hold the aggressor State accountable.

86. The General Assembly was about to vote at an emergency special session on a draft resolution entitled "The territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations". She urged all Member States to vote in favour of the resolution.

87. Russia had placed millions of people in Asia, Africa and the Middle East at the risk of hunger in order to achieve its imperialist goals. Notwithstanding the dire situation, the Government of Ukraine had provided Ethiopia and Somalia with 50,000 tons of grain.

88. As refugees were unlikely to return rapidly to Ukraine, the refugee crisis in Europe might lead to more permanent displacement. In addition, about 1.6 million Ukrainians had been forcibly deported by the aggressor State to its territory and had been resettled without any means of livelihood. Thousands of Ukrainian children had been illegally transferred to Russia for adoption and indoctrination. In addition, there were plans to deport about 30,000 people from the occupied part of Kherson Province to the occupied Crimean Peninsula. Ukraine urged Russia to provide access for UNHCR and other international humanitarian and human rights organizations to Ukrainians who had been forcibly transferred to its territory in order to facilitate their safe return to Ukraine or to States that had Ukrainian refugee support programmes in place.

89. Russia had recently prompted hundreds of thousands of Russian nationals to flee from mobilization to neighbouring countries.

90. Ukraine commended UNHCR for providing more than 2 million Ukrainians with humanitarian assistance and protection services in extremely difficult humanitarian circumstances as well as the unprecedented decision to offer temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees. Ukraine also commended its neighbours and other countries throughout the world for hosting Ukrainians.

91. *Ms. Stasch (Germany), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

92. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre had participated in the launching of the Global Islamic Fund for Refugees. He appreciated the support provided by Saudi Arabia for the important initiative and hoped that other States in the region would follow its example. He also looked forward to the third Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum to be held in February 2023.

93. He was grateful to Algeria for emphasizing the need to stabilize the situation in the Central Sahel and Libya, and he agreed that stabilization was a basic precondition for addressing the root causes of displacement. UNHCR would continue to provide support for the Tindouf refugee camps and he reiterated the appeal for additional humanitarian resources on behalf of the victims of that deplorable humanitarian situation.

94. UNHCR shared the anguish of Ukraine about the recent escalation in the conflict, particularly the targeting of civilians. It would continue to cooperate with the Ukrainian Government in supporting millions of people who had been internally displaced or whose homes had been destroyed. UNHCR would also continue to assist Ukrainians who had left the country for their own safety and to whom it had access.

95. He commended Slovenia for participating in the response to the Ukrainian refugee situation and for stressing that other crises should not be neglected. He appreciated the country's support for worldwide operations by NGOs, and he agreed that special attention should be given to climate-related displacement during the Conference of the Parties.

96. UNHCR greatly appreciated the role of Czechia as a major host of Ukrainian refugees and its close cooperation during the Czech presidency of the Council of the European Union. In addition, its participation in the Junior Professional Officers programme should set an example for other Member States.

97. UNHCR was grateful for the increase in French financial contributions and the unwavering commitment of France to the resettlement of persons from all over the world. He reiterated his appeal to Member States to bear in mind the refugee dimension of the global food crisis. UNHCR was also grateful to France for agreeing to co-sponsor the Global Refugee Forum in 2023.

98. As Bosnia and Herzegovina was a country that had experienced the horrors of war, its comments on the situation in Ukraine were particularly significant. UNHCR was concerned about the flow of migrants through the Balkan route. He welcomed the fact that the European Union was providing Bosnia and Herzegovina with additional resources and that the country was drafting legislation designed to improve integration.

99. He hoped that the South American Conference on Migration, which was about to be opened in Santiago, would lead to the adoption of a regional agenda for migration focusing on the protection of refugees. He appreciated the importance attached by Chile to the issues of statelessness and family reunification, and the Government's intention to adopt a policy that would guarantee the human rights of migrants and refugees.

100. Chad faced enormous challenges as a host country for refugees from almost all neighbouring countries. While he commended its performance, also in legislative terms, he underscored the need for more international assistance, both for food security and for its actions on behalf of refugees and internally displaced persons. He welcomed the signing of the Doha Peace Agreement, which could contribute not only to national but also to regional stability.

101. **Ms. Molcean** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Republic of Moldova was facing a massive refugee crisis. Her Government strongly condemned the act of aggression committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which was a flagrant violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The recent massive Russian missile attacks against the cities and, in particular, civilian and critical infrastructure of Ukraine were causing loss of life, suffering and destruction. Moreover, three of those missiles had crossed the airspace of the Republic of Moldova, posing a serious risk to its citizens and refugees living there; her Government also strongly condemned that violation of its airspace.

102. Over half a million refugees – mostly women and children – had entered the Republic of Moldova, and more than 80,000 of whom had chosen to stay there, making it one of the world's largest host countries in terms of per capita numbers of refugees. More than 80 per cent of the refugees were staying in Moldovan citizens' homes. Factors such as high infection and death rates from COVID-19, inflation at over 30 per cent and electricity shortages were exacerbating the refugee crisis. Her Government was grateful for the support of UNHCR. It was very important to support the families hosting refugees. As part of refugees' social integration, some 2,000 children had been enrolled in her country's education system, as at September 2022.

103. A regional round table on the challenges of managing mass influxes was being held in Chisinau in November 2022. Her Government wished to reaffirm the commitment of the Republic of Moldova to its strong partnership with UNHCR.

104. **Ms. Duncan** (New Zealand) said that her Government unequivocally condemned the unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russia on Ukraine, to which her country's immigration system had responded by fast-tracking support for Ukrainians to remain in or return to New Zealand immediately. In addition, it had introduced a temporary visa for Ukrainian families known as the 2022 Special Ukraine Visa to enable the estimated 1,600 Ukrainian-born

residents and citizens of New Zealand to sponsor their close relatives resident in Ukraine for two-year residence in her country. New Zealand had also, in response to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, established an emergency visa process for Afghan nationals at risk of harm due to their links with the country and, as part of its ongoing commitment to international protection for the people of Afghanistan, had set aside 750 places in its three-year Refugee Quota Programme for Afghan refugees.

105. Persons of concern from groups such as women, disabled persons and LGBTIQ+ persons were especially vulnerable, so her Government welcomed the Office's commitment to inclusive humanitarian action, in particular gender and disability inclusion. In addition, her Government was strongly committed to offering refugees with priority needs resettlement in New Zealand as a durable solution and to honouring the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum on education, employment, community sponsorship, support for new and emerging resettlement countries in the Asia-Pacific region and building protection capacity in the region. It was working with domestic and international partners to establish the Refugee Advisory Panel, intended to ensure that refugees' interests, perspectives and knowledge informed and influenced policies relating to them. Lastly, the Government was making good progress with implementing the Community Organisation Refugee Sponsorship Category pilot project.

106. **Ms. Belskaya** (Belarus) said it would be impossible to reduce the number of persons crossing international borders in fear for their lives and in search of adequate living conditions without addressing the root causes, which included war, climate change and the growing disparity between the global South and the global North. For that reason, her Government had, for the previous five years, been promoting an initiative relating to international dialogue on security, under which States, in particular great Powers, would be able to reach agreements and establish constructive international relations.

107. The policy of sanctions, increasingly employed as an instrument of international relations, was unhelpful, as was States' unilateral suspension of well-established means of cooperation with neighbouring countries. In addition, it was unacceptable to push back asylum-seekers at the border, in particular when such persons also suffered racism.

108. Her Government would continue working with UNHCR on improving the national refugee systems of Belarus, strengthening its migration services' capabilities and ensuring the sustainability of its achievements; the decision to retain a country office in Minsk was welcome. National and local government, along with civil society organizations, would continue working with United Nations entities, including on the Refugee Coordination Forum for Ukrainian refugees. In 2022, five times more asylum applications had been made in Belarus than in 2021, with most applicants coming from Ukraine, although some originated in other places, including the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan. In September 2022, refugees from Ukraine and other countries had been granted additional benefits in respect of employment, education, health care and pension provision.

109. **Ms. Eilon Shahar** (Israel) said that, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, her country had welcomed thousands of displaced persons – from both Ukraine and the Russian Federation – and integrated them into society. Israel was proud of its involvement in supporting asylum-seekers and refugees displaced from Ukraine through the innovative Blue Dot safe spaces, protection and support hubs, or Blue Dots. In Poland, experts from Israel had worked with UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on assessing the Blue Dots' needs in relation to mental health and psychosocial support.

110. The renewed commitment on the part of the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner to eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment within the Office was welcome. Her Government called on other Member States to avoid politicization of UNHCR, as some States had sought to do during recent discussions of the Office's guidance on promoting international protection.

111. **Mr. Matjama** (Lesotho) said that refugees in his country were free to study, work and access all public services, including medical care. In 2022, with help from UNHCR, five refugees originating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been resettled in Lesotho from the Comoros. Thanks to reduced fees, more refugees continued to be naturalized in Lesotho, and five refugees would graduate from university in the country by the end of 2022.

The Government worked with UNHCR and the Lesotho branch of Skillshare International to provide numerous services for refugees, including livelihoods activities. The Office also provided other financial and technical support, including a study on displacement, which would inform the country's legal and policy framework.

112. In host countries, diseases such as Ebola had caused some refugees to lose their livelihoods and their homes, often forcing them to return to overcrowded reception centres, requiring those countries' Governments to allocate more resources. In such States, the challenge of aligning national priorities and the needs of host countries with UNHCR expectations necessitated more technical and financial support. Nevertheless, his Government remained committed to the idea of burden- and responsibility-sharing.

113. **Mr. Da Conceição** (Mozambique) said that, although Mozambique faced, in addition to the numerous interconnected crises in the world, some 900,000 persons internally displaced by terrorist attacks, there had been progress with restoring security and, therefore, gradually returning the internally displaced persons to their home regions. However, between 2019 and 2022, his country had also been hit by numerous natural disasters, including five tropical cyclones, that had caused loss of life, population displacements, extensive infrastructure damage and disruption of socioeconomic activity; various partners, including UNHCR and other United Nations bodies, had intervened to mitigate their impact.

114. In line with the I Belong campaign, his Government would be working with UNHCR to conduct a study on statelessness in Mozambique. The Government pledged to continue hosting refugees and ensuring their local integration. Such integration was a durable solution that allowed refugees to rebuild their lives while making economic contributions to local communities. Another durable solution was voluntary repatriation, which was also taking place in Mozambique. Socioeconomic support and development assistance, intended to help achieve security, peace and stability, were among the means of tackling the root causes of forced displacement, which was essential.

115. **Ms. Voicu** (Romania) said that her Government condemned in the strongest terms the aggression against Ukraine and reiterated its firm support for the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The recent attacks against civilians and infrastructure were violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, which her Government also condemned.

116. Her Government remained committed to assisting Ukrainian citizens fleeing conflict-affected regions and had swiftly responded to their situation, providing humanitarian aid through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Between the start of the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and 30 September, almost 2.5 million Ukrainians had entered Romania, with over 80,000 – mostly women and children – remaining there and nearly 4,400 claiming asylum. Near the Romania-Ukraine border, her Government had taken measures to establish a European Union logistics hub – RescEU – for managing and transporting materials provided by international partners. Structures had been established to facilitate the Government's cooperation with civil society actors, NGOs and international partners. By the end of September 2022, more than 6,500 refugees had found paid work in Romania. Housing, training centres for independent living, empowerment and rehabilitation centres and care and assistance centres had all been established. Moreover, all Ukrainian children in Romania, whatever their immigration status, had access to the State education system under the same conditions as Romanian citizens.

117. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that the Office welcomed the progress Mozambique had made in ensuring security, which would have an immediate impact on reducing internal displacement, and its work on statelessness. Since the issues of climate change and conflict intersected in Mozambique, the country's problems were complex and difficult to address. Although small-scale, the resettlement and naturalization measures offered to refugees by Lesotho were good examples to follow; the Office had noted the Government's request for additional support.

118. UNHCR attached a high priority to supporting the efforts of the Republic of Moldova to host refugees – as his visits to the country along with the Deputy High Commissioner and the Assistant High Commissioner demonstrated – and would continue to do so. He strongly supported the move from emergency response towards the inclusion of refugees, in particular

the most vulnerable segments of the population. The delegation of Romania had confirmed his initial impression – formed during his visit in March 2022 – that the country’s reception of Ukrainian refugees very well organized; in addition, the Office was grateful to Romania for hosting the very important logistical hub of the European Union. UNHCR noted the efforts by Belarus to improve its national management of population flows, including refugees, and its Minsk office remained available to help with that improvement and with finding solutions for asylum-seekers.

119. The Office was grateful to Israel for its support for the Blue Dots, which were a good model for protection in action and could be worth considering for other large-scale refugee operations, in particular for helping women, unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups. UNHCR was also grateful to Israel for its work on combating sexual exploitation and abuse, in which the Deputy High Commissioner had played an especially important role. In addition, the Office was highly appreciative of the 2022 Special Ukraine Visa offered by New Zealand, of the country’s continued humanitarian visas for and resettlement of Afghans and of its very good resettlement programme in general. Lastly, UNHCR was grateful that New Zealand was one of the countries pioneering refugee participation approaches.

*The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.*