

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

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**Standing Committee**  
74<sup>th</sup> meeting

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**Report of the seventy-fourth meeting of the  
Standing Committee (5-7 March 2019)**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, His Excellency Ambassador Boudjemâa Delmi (Algeria) opened the seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee. Statements and presentations made by UNHCR's senior managers can be found at the [74<sup>th</sup> meeting website](#).

## **II. Adoption of the Standing Committee work programme for 2019**

2. The Committee adopted the agenda for the meeting (EC/70/SC/CRP.1) and the 2019 work programme (EC/70/SC/CRP.2) as presented.

## **III. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources**

3. The Deputy High Commissioner briefed the Committee on the latest developments in UNHCR's change process, including the regionalization plan. She noted the impact it had on many staff and their families and outlined some of the measures the Office was taking to support them.

### **A. Revision of the terms of reference and criteria for membership of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee**

4. The Deputy High Commissioner recalled the recommendations that had resulted from a review of the Office's oversight functions undertaken in 2016. Following this, the High Commissioner decided to consolidate the oversight functions under the Inspector General's Office, as well as to seek the advice of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC) in the appointment of the Inspector General and, if necessary, early termination of their tenure. To enable the IAOC to assume these functions, its terms of reference and criteria for membership needed to be revised.

5. The draft decision on the revised terms of reference and criteria for membership of the IAOC as presented in EC/70/SC/CRP.5 rev.1 was adopted.

### **B. Oral update on the work of the Inspector General's Office**

6. The Inspector General provided an update on the work of her Office. She emphasized the progress made resulting from the oversight reforms, including the establishment of a new "strategic oversight" capacity, strengthened relationships with internal and external oversight entities, as well as with States and partners, and improved collaboration and dialogue within the organization, including with senior management.

7. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work of the Inspector General's Office (IGO) and the organization's senior leadership in strengthening integrity. UNHCR was encouraged to pursue measures to enhance integrity and the effectiveness of its work through robust accountability and oversight mechanisms. While delegations noted with concern the significant rise in complaints of misconduct, they acknowledged that much of this could be attributed to the increased activities of the organization in this area and improved awareness and confidence in the systems. There was also recognition that UNHCR operated in difficult environments that were inherently high-risk, in which prevention was essential. In this regard, there was strong support for UNHCR's enhanced risk management approach, including the increasing number of risk management specialists positioned in the field. UNHCR was encouraged to continue responding to misconduct and strengthening risk management.

8. Delegations welcomed the introduction of the strategic oversight function, as well as the comparative review of seven operations in relation to the implementation of UNHCR's emergency policy, with a focus on lessons learned. The Committee commended UNHCR's work on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment. The Office was encouraged to continue taking a strong approach to this issue, including by setting a good example for its partners. In this context, concern was expressed over the rise in complaints of misconduct against implementing partners, particularly in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, and UNHCR was asked what actions it was taking to address this. The need for closer monitoring was underscored, and UNHCR was encouraged to enhance due diligence practices and strengthen accountability measures in relation to its implementing partners.

9. UNHCR's enhanced approach to communications on oversight matters was welcomed, with States stressing the importance of ensuring timeliness and transparency. This was crucial to maintaining continued trust and confidence in the organization. The quarterly integrity briefings were particularly appreciated, and these should be extended to all States. Numerous delegations supported the need for the IGO to be adequately resourced, including sufficient capacity for investigations. There was also a question about how the regionalization plan would affect the work of the IGO and whether it planned to establish a presence in all regional bureaux locations.

10. The Inspector General noted that the work of her Office had changed significantly over the past few years and that it was more engaged in prevention, working closely with management and the entire organization on a number of workstreams. She described various initiatives the IGO was supporting, which had contributed to a significant increase in its workload, including those related to integrity, transparency and reporting to donors. Efforts were also being made to provide more information to victims and complainants. With respect to implementing partners, the Inspector General indicated that the increase in complaints against them was a consequence of the measures UNHCR had put in place, including community feedback mechanisms. To address this, a "whole of organization" approach was needed, from the selection of partners to better monitoring of activities. Initiatives were also underway to strengthen training, due diligence and risk-based monitoring. Regarding resources for the IGO, the Deputy High Commissioner emphasized that there were various entities within the organization involved in oversight issues. While this was a priority issue and additional resources had been provided to the IGO last year, it was important to keep in mind that UNHCR faced a significant funding gap.

### **C. Oral update on UNHCR's operational regionalization plan**

11. The Deputy High Commissioner expanded further on UNHCR's change process, noting the clear urgency in light of the evolving humanitarian landscape and the need to rethink the required skills, capacities and ways of working needed at the country and regional levels, and to adapt accordingly. She informed the Committee that the number of regional bureaux would be increased from five to seven and based in Amman, Bangkok, Dakar, Geneva, Nairobi, Panama City and Pretoria, in alignment with geographical coverage of other agencies and the United Nations development system.

12. Several States conveyed support for the rationale behind the regionalization plan and expressed hope that it would achieve the objectives foreseen, notably strengthening country operations, oversight and partnerships. Nevertheless, concern was expressed regarding how communications with the Permanent Missions in Geneva would be maintained, with numerous States highlighting the important role of the regional bureaux and stressing the need to ensure that political dialogue and information-sharing be continued. UNHCR needed to ensure that communications remained transparent, inclusive and timely.

13. While noting that UNHCR expected the plan to be carried out in a "cost-neutral way", several States asked questions in relation to the costing, including how UNHCR planned to measure the cost savings or cost increases, what trade-offs were being made in the 2019 budget to cover the costs, whether the establishment of three regional bureaux in the Africa

region would triple the cost structures, and what would be the net impact on the administrative costs of the operations.

14. Clarification was sought as to what authorities would be transferred to the regions and what would remain in Geneva. Concern was also expressed about the timing of the initiative, given other commitments made by the organization including delivering on the GCR. UNHCR was asked about the indicators to measure the success of the regionalization plan and what targets were being set. There was also a question about how the support and management global strategic priorities would be used to capture the expected improvements. States highlighted the importance of staff welfare, stressing that this should be at the centre of the change process. UNHCR was asked to keep delegations informed and consult them on the process, given the direct impact it had on States.

15. The Deputy High Commissioner thanked delegations for their support. She noted that while UNHCR prided itself on being efficient and effective, the regionalization process aimed to make the organization even more so. In terms of what authorities were delegated, she assured the Committee that a balance had to be struck and that the Office was extremely cautious when it came to financial matters, particularly spending authority. At the same time, the regional bureaux and country operations needed to have the flexibility to move resources around, depending on the circumstances on the ground. She stressed the importance of having “a strong centre, strong region and strong country,” and ensuring financial oversight while not slowing down the decision-making process at the operations level. Discussions were currently ongoing in terms of what authorities would be delegated and ensuring that the newly designed regional bureaux had the sufficient capacities to support them.

16. Regarding communications with the Permanent Missions, the Deputy High Commissioner indicated that, while the method would change, the discussions would continue. UNHCR was exploring various options and looking closely at how other agencies had successfully accomplished this in the context of decentralization. In terms of indicators of success, the Deputy High Commissioner promised to get back to the Committee on this point, as there were various inter-related change processes underway and it was important to ensure coherence. In relation to staff welfare, the Director of Change Management spoke about the mitigation efforts underway for those colleagues who would be directly affected, as well as the various initiatives to keep staff informed.

#### **IV. Update on budgets and funding**

17. The Controller and Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management (DFAM), and the Director of the Division of External Relations (DER) jointly presented the update on programme budget and funding for 2018 and 2019 (EC/70/SC/CRP.7/Rev.2). The Controller updated the Committee on the financial situation for 2018 and the requirements for 2019, while the Director of DER described funding trends and stressed the importance of flexible funding for emergencies and operations that failed to attract attention.

18. Delegations expressed concern over the significant gap between the assessed needs and available funding in 2018. Chronic underfunding compromised the quality of assistance and protection provided. Donors were called upon to provide unearmarked, timely and adequate funding to support life-saving activities and solutions, including in protracted refugee situations. UNHCR was urged to further broaden its donor base and share lessons learned in countries where the contributions of private donors exceeded those of the government. There was also a suggestion to clarify how budgets, planning and results guided UNHCR’s strategic vision, including to attract new and emerging donors. States emphasized that an adequate budget would enable UNHCR to fulfil its mandate and contribute to the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), recalling the importance of equitable, predictable and sustainable burden- and responsibility-sharing in meeting the needs of persons of concern and host communities.

19. Engagement from a range of stakeholders, including development actors, was viewed as critical to fill strategic gaps, promote complementarity and build the institutional capacity

of host countries. A “one-refugee approach” and prioritization based on needs and vulnerability were encouraged. UNHCR’s efforts to align reporting with the International Aid Transparency Initiative were commended. States looked forward to the findings of the review of the 7 per cent programme support cost policy and to the forthcoming informal consultative meeting on management efficiencies.

20. Responding to questions about the impact of the funding gap, the Controller explained that longer-term solutions would be affected in favour of more immediate protection and assistance needs. He confirmed that if the budget was fully funded, UNHCR would be able to scale up operations particularly with the support of partners and the use of cash-based interventions. Depending on the terms of the agreement, funding that was unimplemented was generally carried forward or returned. The Director of DER highlighted efforts to broaden UNHCR’s donor base and raise funds through individual giving programmes. The Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service also spoke about the efforts to increase allocations from the Central Emergency Response Fund. The Deputy High Commissioner described the constant efforts to balance the funding gap and underscored the needs-based budget, which UNHCR was asked to implement. She also noted that the regionalization process should lead to a clearer understanding of the impact and gaps.

## **V. Strategic partnerships and coordination (including United Nations reform)**

21. The Director of DER provided an overview of UNHCR’s efforts to strengthen its partnerships and key developments in coordination over the past year (EC/70/SC/CRP.6/Rev.1). She also outlined how UNHCR was contributing to broader reforms in the United Nations.

22. The Committee welcomed UNHCR’s commitment to broadening its strategic partnerships and commented positively on its revitalized cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on mixed movements, including in response to the Venezuela situation and in Libya. While the recent joint letter to all staff was widely appreciated, one delegation underscored that the partnership should avoid any conflation between refugee and migrant issues. There was also a question about how the two organizations would monitor implementation.

23. Several States highlighted the importance of humanitarian-development cooperation and welcomed the positive synergies towards financing development activities, benefiting both refugees and host communities. They praised the enhanced collaboration with the World Bank and establishment of the Joint Data Centre in Copenhagen, as well the recent data-sharing agreement with the World Food Programme. These developments were expected to improve planning but also strengthen the analysis of broader trends related to displacement. While welcoming the increase in data sharing, it was important to take data sensitivities into consideration.

24. The continued robust engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the conversion of the partner portal to an inter-agency portal was applauded, and UNHCR was encouraged to pursue multi-year funding through its strategic partnerships. One delegation noted that the new project partnership agreements may include a section on data and privacy and questioned how UNHCR intended to ensure compliance with standards on data privacy.

25. The Committee was encouraged by the efforts to strengthen the Refugee Coordination Model and stressed that strategic coordination should aim to ease the burden borne by host governments. It also voiced support for the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment of UNHCR, which recommended enhanced operational coordination at the field level for both refugee and internal displacement situations. The Committee welcomed UNHCR’s efforts to improve predictability in situations of internal displacement and looked forward to receiving its revised policy in this area. The Office was encouraged to strengthen its cluster lead responsibilities. Support was

also expressed for the implementation of the plan of action in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GP20).

26. The Committee took note of UNHCR's efforts to implement the "grand bargain" commitments, with one delegation stressing that the initiative was as much about the quality of the interventions as it was about quantity.

27. The Head of the Partnership and Coordination Service affirmed that the IOM-UNHCR relationship was based on practical, operational experience and stressed that the two organizations would continue to work jointly, including through joint planning, missions and stock-taking. UNHCR recognized the importance of enhancing its NGO partnerships and would continue to take steps to reduce administrative burdens and to improve the openness of communication and fairness of decisions. In response to questions regarding regionalization and the effect on local partners, he said it was expected to give greater accessibility to local partners, though engagement at Headquarters continued to be needed to ensure coherence across regions.

## **VI. Regional activities and global programmes**

28. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) gave an overview of the challenges and opportunities facing UNHCR's operations. He highlighted a number of overarching themes, including emergency preparedness and response efforts, predictable engagement in situations of internal displacement, and the importance of partnerships and funding.

### **A. Regional updates**

#### **(i) Africa**

29. The Director of the Africa Bureau spoke about the rising number of displaced persons and enduring conflicts on the continent. Despite these worrying trends, a strong tradition of hospitality continued to characterize the response to displacement by African States. In the context of regionalization, he noted that Africa would host three of the seven regional bureaux and that country operations and situational coordination structures would also be strengthened.

30. While conveying appreciation for UNHCR's efforts to respond to displacement in Africa, delegations underscored the urgent need to address the root causes. They recognized the continued measures to promote a favourable protection environment and strengthen comprehensive responses for refugees on the continent. These included a gradual shift towards urban-like settlements, enhanced freedom of movement and access to financial services and livelihood opportunities. In line with the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF), these measures not only supported self-reliance but also benefited local communities and economies. Taking note of the two-year progress assessment on the CRRF, States expressed appreciation for those countries applying it and its principles. At the same time, one delegation pointed to discrepancies between national policies undertaken in support of the CRRF and field realities.

31. States reiterated their commitment to achieving solutions in Africa, noting that the African Union had declared 2019 as the year of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), with a particular focus on durable solutions. At the same time, fewer third country solutions and the absence of improvement in the conditions of countries of origin that were necessary to facilitate voluntary return were highlighted as hindering factors. With this in mind, UNHCR was encouraged to strengthen its support to regional and sub-regional efforts aimed at ensuring sustainable solutions, including those of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in relation to the Somali refugee situation. At the same time, the relationship between regional frameworks and national laws was questioned, particularly in the context of local integration. Concerns were also voiced regarding the voluntary nature of returns in some contexts, and States called for upholding the principle of non-refoulement.

32. With respect to the GCR, States looked forward to its implementation, describing their expectations in relation to equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing. They considered the measurement of impact through time-bound targets and the exchange of lessons learned to be crucial. UNHCR was urged to continue fostering complementarity in humanitarian and development responses. Activities such as education and skills training were welcomed as they aimed to reduce the strain placed on host countries and dependence on assistance. The need to allocate resources commensurate with the burden that Africa shouldered was also underscored. UNHCR was commended for the steps it had taken to address allegations of fraud and exploitation in its operations in Africa, and the Office was encouraged to ensure transparency and communication with donors, including at the field level.

33. The Director thanked the Committee for its support for operations in Africa, and he and his Deputy Directors in the Bureau provided feedback on numerous country and regional situations. The Director also spoke about the importance of partnerships in generating socioeconomic inclusion for refugees, measuring the impact of their presence and devising programmes benefiting local economies. He highlighted the World Bank's contributions in this regard. Responding to a question about the positive impact of having three new regional bureaux in Africa, the Director noted they would be located nearer to operations, helping to save resources, foster synergies and ensure shorter response times. The Assistant High Commissioner (Operations) added that particular investments would be made in transition management and business continuity ahead of implementation later this year. In response to a question on how UNHCR would ensure coordination between sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa, the Deputy Director (Central Africa and West Africa) noted that there were points of confluence around certain issues and that coordination would be reinforced, including in addressing mixed movements.

**(ii) The Middle East and North Africa**

34. The Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau of the Middle East and North Africa (Iraq and Syria situations), presented the regional update, highlighting the ongoing displacement crises in the region, the need for greater responsibility sharing and the challenges of mixed movements and protection at sea.

35. The discussion focused heavily on the Syria situation. The ongoing burden placed on the host countries was emphasized, as was the importance of solutions. In this context, it was noted that spontaneous returns of Syrian refugees and IDPs were already taking place. While some stated that returns should not be limited by preconditions, others highlighted the importance of voluntary, safe, dignified and informed returns. In this regard, UNHCR's policy on returns was supported by numerous delegations. Inside the Syrian Arab Republic, the importance of addressing land, housing and property rights, and the lack of basic services, was highlighted, as was the need for return monitoring. UNHCR was encouraged to ensure an inclusive, multi-agency and well-coordinated approach to durable solutions planning, including with IOM and others. The need for a protection-centered approach, both inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in the region, was also emphasized.

36. UNHCR was encouraged to further develop its long-term planning for Iraqi refugees in the region, including support for local integration and voluntary return. Support to families unable to return or prevented from doing so, as well as to survivors of physical and gender-based violence, must continue to be a priority. UNHCR's work in both Libya and Yemen, under difficult circumstances, was commended and, in relation to both countries, concern was expressed over the lack of access to people of concern. Several delegations drew attention to the conditions inside detention centres in Libya and, in this regard, the opening of the "gathering and departure facility" was welcomed as an alternative. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's increased international presence and expansion of activities throughout Libya, and the Office was urged to focus on protection activities. Concern was also expressed for the protracted situation in the camps near Tindouf, and the need to achieve a durable solution was highlighted. One delegation commended the constant commitment of UNHCR and its partners towards the situation of vulnerable Sahrawi refugees. Another delegation made a call for UNHCR to proceed with registration, in accordance with its mandate and in line with relevant Security Council resolutions. With respect to mixed movements, there was



a call for strengthened cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination, and an approach that addressed the drivers, deterred human trafficking and smuggling, and supported international solidarity.

37. The Deputy Director (Iraq and Syria situations) reiterated appreciation for the continued generosity of the countries hosting Syrian refugees and recognized the continuing impact the crisis had on them. He noted that the upcoming Brussels III conference was essential in ensuring increased support to the host countries. He spoke about the importance of removing the obstacles to return, but emphasized the principle of voluntariness. UNHCR had expanded its access inside the Syrian Arab Republic and was conducting monitoring visits. Responding to a question about the usefulness of one-off cash payments in Yemen, the Deputy Director (North Africa, Yemen, Israel and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council) clarified that UNHCR's cash programme had been very effective in responding to the needs on the ground and overcoming impediments. On Libya, she lamented that, despite the opening of the "gathering and departure facility", the number of resettlement slots remained very limited. As for registration, she recalled that this was the prerogative of the host government.

**(iii) The Americas**

38. The Director of the Americas Bureau regretted the deterioration of a number of situations across the region, which had resulted in increased displacement and presented a number of challenges. She outlined UNHCR's strategy in support of government response efforts, focusing on a cross-cutting approach to protection and solutions.

39. Delegations viewed the GCR as an opportunity to reinforce the international response to large-scale forced displacement in the Americas. They applauded the countries applying the comprehensive regional refugee response framework (known by its Spanish acronym "MIRPS") in Central America and Mexico. As part of their ongoing efforts to achieve durable solutions, States described activities undertaken to eradicate statelessness in the Americas, in line with UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.

40. The situation in the north of Central America, which continued to generate displacement, was preoccupying. UNHCR's expanded presence and operational capacity was welcomed, though the Office was encouraged to step up its advocacy to draw attention to this neglected humanitarian crisis. There was also an urgent need to build protection mechanisms and asylum capacity in the region. In this regard, the positive impact that the "protection transfer arrangement" had in facilitating the resettlement of numerous at-risk individuals from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras was highlighted. UNHCR was encouraged to seek additional partners in order to sustain such activities over the long term, and there was a call for increased resettlement in the region for those in need.

41. Given reports of internal displacement and forced recruitment in Colombia, concern was raised regarding the possible protection gaps that might arise as UNHCR planned to decrease its budget for IDPs. UNHCR was encouraged to maintain its community-based protection and monitoring activities in the country, particularly as other organizations scaled down their operations. Delegations also warned against decreasing attention towards Colombian refugees in the region.

42. The Committee expressed concern over the current socioeconomic crisis in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and the large numbers of people leaving the country. UNHCR was commended for its leadership in helping to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response across the region. Noting the vulnerability of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and reports of exploitation and abuse, delegations urged UNHCR to support the improvement of reception conditions, advocate legal stay arrangements and access to basic services, and help strengthen institutional capacity. The Committee expressed appreciation for the establishment of the Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform, together with IOM. The contributions of the Joint UNHCR-IOM Special Representative were also lauded. Several States highlighted their engagement in the intergovernmental "Quito process" in order to harmonize the regional response to the transit and arrival of increasing numbers of Venezuelans.

43. The Director thanked countries for their leadership in the context of regional and sub-regional initiatives and noted that good practices emerging from shared experiences would be worth highlighting at the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum. Acknowledging the call of delegations for further support from the international community, she stressed the importance of bilateral cooperation, including with financial institutions. With respect to the Venezuela situation, she noted that planning for longer-term solutions that enabled socioeconomic integration would be necessary, particularly if the situation were to become protracted. Responding to a question about meeting the wide range of needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, the Director explained that the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan encapsulated all sectoral activities through joint planning with numerous partners, including civil society organizations. She remarked that UNHCR's regionalization process was an opportunity to expand collaboration with partners.

**(iv) Asia and the Pacific**

44. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific gave an overview of UNHCR's operations in the region, focusing on protection and solutions as well as partnerships. He spoke about the regionalization plan, which would result in a Regional Bureau that was closer to the point of delivery and more strategically located to enhance engagement with governments and regional organizations.

45. Delegations commended Bangladesh for its generosity in hosting hundreds of thousands of Rohingya from Myanmar, while expressing concern about ongoing violence causing further displacement in Northern Rakhine State. Several delegations registered their support for voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return for refugees to Rakhine State, calling on Myanmar to create the conditions conducive for such return and to guarantee access for UNHCR and its partners. Several delegations asked for clarification on the implications of the planned reclassification of the emergency level from L3 to L2, particularly with regard to the mobilization of resources.

46. Noting that the Afghan refugee situation was in its fortieth year, delegations praised the neighbouring countries for their ongoing hospitality and called for additional support for them. The recent decision of Pakistan to allow registered Afghan refugees to open bank accounts was particularly applauded. Delegations congratulated Afghanistan on its decision to apply the CRRF, with the aim of facilitating the integration of returnees. Concerns were raised regarding the ongoing displacement in the country, not only due to violence and instability but also drought. Several delegations welcomed the partnership between the World Bank and UNHCR to support Afghan refugees in the region and returnees, as well as hosting and receiving communities.

47. Regarding the regionalization plan, one delegation asked whether it would lead to cost efficiencies that could result in better services for refugees and host communities in the region.

48. The Director thanked delegations for their comprehensive feedback. He acknowledged that more needed to be done to improve conditions inside Afghanistan to make returns sustainable. UNHCR was focused on 15 areas of high return and investing in infrastructure, education and primary health care facilities. The Office was also part of an inter-agency effort to mobilize resources to respond to the drought. With regard to the Rohingya situation, the Director noted that the Office was looking at creating the conditions in Myanmar for voluntary returns in safety and dignity. He explained that the reclassification was due to the immediate urgency of 600,000 people suddenly crossing the border in late 2017 having diminished. The current financial requirements were outlined in the Joint Response Plan and would not change because of the reclassification; support was very much still needed.

**(v) Europe**

49. The Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe presented the regional update, highlighting the positive contributions of cities and local governments, citizens and civil society organizations, in integrating refugees and making solidarity a reality in Europe.

While commending European States for demonstrating solidarity through resettlement and complementary pathways, she also cautioned that the needs were at an all-time high.

50. Delegations expressed appreciation for the breadth of UNHCR's advocacy work across the region at a time when the importance of affirming a positive narrative on refugees could not be more important, while acknowledging the scale of the ongoing challenges in providing protection-sensitive and timely solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers across 38 countries.

51. Attention was drawn to disparities in how European countries grant international protection to people fleeing conflict and persecution, with calls for European Union asylum law to be applied more consistently. Appreciation was expressed for the recommendations made by UNHCR to the European Union, including on the reform of the European Common Asylum System. European States were encouraged to develop ambitious and concrete pledges ahead of the first Global Refugee Forum, including measures to safeguard the right to claim asylum.

52. The Committee expressed alarm over continued deaths at sea, with one delegation referring to a "disembarkation crisis in the central Mediterranean. Ad hoc solutions for disembarkation could not continue to be relied upon, and the reform of the Common European Asylum System, particularly the Dublin Regulation, was key. At the same time, an efficient system to return those not in need of international protection was needed in order to maintain the integrity of asylum space in the European Union.

53. While the European Union's joint effort to enhance global resettlement represented a meaningful contribution to international burden- and responsibility-sharing, resettlement was not a "quick fix". States were encouraged to expand other safe and legal routes for refugees, withdrawing restrictions for family reunification and for example. The development of a three-year strategy on resettlement was welcomed.

54. Delegates were supportive of UNHCR's focus on child protection, including through pilot projects in Italy, Serbia, Sweden and Switzerland. At the same time, concern was expressed about the plight of unaccompanied minors arriving in Europe, particularly those in Greece and Turkey. UNHCR was commended for its joint initiative with the European Youth Forum, which promoted social cohesion across Europe. There were also numerous positive comments on UNHCR's efforts to address statelessness in Europe, particularly in the western Balkans.

55. UNHCR was urged to remain actively engaged with protracted IDP situations in Europe, in cooperation with national authorities, particularly in the South Caucasus. It was important that IDPs felt they were still on the radar of the international community in the absence of a political settlement of the root causes that led to displacement. UNHCR's sustained and robust participation as co-moderator of working group II on humanitarian issues in the Geneva International Discussions on Georgia was appreciated. Concern was expressed over the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine, and UNHCR's collaboration with partners to develop a plan to bridge the gap between humanitarian relief and development, with a view to ensure the sustainability of assistance to the most vulnerable populations, was welcomed.

56. The Director assured delegations that child protection and preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence remained priorities for UNHCR. The outcomes of the pilot projects supporting strengthened procedures and services for unaccompanied and separated children would be analysed and recommendations taken forward, together with the United Nations Children's Fund. In response to concern over the dire protection situation at the refugee identification centres on the Greek islands, the Director assured the Committee that UNHCR would continue to work with the Government to support the protection response. She also confirmed that UNHCR's work to address sexual and gender-based violence was also targeting men and boys. In terms of UNHCR's cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on a joint action plan to expand employment opportunities, she noted that the series of employment workshops that brought together potential employers, local authorities and persons of concern would be expanded in 2019.

## **B. Global programmes (including HIV/AIDS)**

57. The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management (DPSM) presented the update on global programmes (EC/70/SC/CRP.3), providing an overview of UNHCR's activities in a broad range of sectors, including HIV/AIDS. He also highlighted developments in cash programming, food insecurity, registration, identity management and data collection.

58. The Committee welcomed the work undertaken to improve UNHCR's operational capacity and the increased focus on data across the organization's global programmes. Quality data was seen as the necessary foundation for sound strategic and programmatic decision-making and, in this respect, the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Centre in Copenhagen would facilitate more efficient and effective responses. Nonetheless, many delegations were concerned about data safety and protecting individual identities. Delegations asked how data was used to enhance accountability, participation and communication with affected populations, and disability was mentioned as an important factor to take into consideration.

59. Progress in the inclusion of refugees in national healthcare systems, as well as efforts to enhance the availability of refugee health data, was positively noted. The Committee enquired if UNHCR worked with the World Health Organization to analyse data from health services in refugee contexts. More information on the new integrated refugee health information system was also requested, as were further updates on HIV programming, including how UNHCR was monitoring the quality of its partnerships and the impact of its interventions. It was important to prevent standards on HIV/AIDS interventions from declining as these services were transitioned to national systems. UNHCR was asked how it collaborated with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) on HIV-related activities.

60. Delegations commended UNHCR for the advancements in the delivery of cash assistance and for strengthening partnerships and coordination in this area. The organization was encouraged to implement a common cash system and to remain committed to high-quality and context-specific programming, even as efficiencies were implemented. Mobile banking as a cash delivery mechanism was also put forward as a way to further enhance engagement with the private sector in this area. UNHCR was asked how the United Nations common cash system could be as "local and people-centred" as possible, and updates on progress achieved in the selected pilot countries were requested.

61. The Director of DPSM acknowledged the importance of working with partners and emphasized that UNHCR was focused on collaboration as opposed to competition between organizations or, in other words, "looking to do better – together". He stressed that biometrics needed to be rolled out in a way that put data protection at the forefront. In response to a question regarding the environment, he informed the Committee that a task force had been formed to work on issues such as carbon neutrality and sustainability. Collaboration with local governments was essential in mitigating the impact of displacement on the environment. With regard to innovation, he agreed that sustainability was crucial and gave the example of solar panels, which were easy to install but required security to prevent them from being stolen. With respect to accountability to affected populations, the Director noted that this was a priority for UNHCR and efforts had been made to ensure that the organization received feedback from refugees and host communities through the results-based management framework.

## **C. Emergency preparedness and response**

62. The Director of the Division of Emergency, Security and Supply provided an update on emergency preparedness and response (EC/70/SC/CRP.4), highlighting the challenging global context for UNHCR in 2018 and priorities for 2019. He noted that partnerships had contributed to improving the quality of emergency responses and that the number of national partners had increased, in line with UNHCR's commitments under the "grand bargain".

63. The Committee commended UNHCR for having strengthened its emergency preparedness and response systems, and for having made relevant policies and resources available online. Concern was expressed in relation to the increasing number of countries placed in the medium or high-risk categories in 2018, based on UNHCR's early warning, risk monitoring analysis and preparedness system. Delegations queried how resources, data, and information were shared in the early stages of an emergency, in particular in IDP situations and those involving mixed movements. UNHCR was encouraged to further align itself with localization principles, including working more closely with local women's organizations in the areas of empowerment, gender equality and response to sexual and gender-based violence.

64. In response to questions regarding collaboration in emergencies, the Director described UNHCR's work with other agencies at the local, regional and headquarters level, including through the Emergency Directors Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). With respect to the IASC Protocol on Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation, he underscored that UNHCR was committed to work with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other IASC members to advance its implementation and ensure that it fed into decision-making processes. Once the modalities were agreed, UNHCR would amend its emergency policy to reflect the protocol. In response to concerns expressed regarding gaps in UNHCR's engagement in IDP situations, particularly in relation to the timeliness of its response, the Director noted that UNHCR took this very seriously and was now working on its new IDP engagement policy aimed at strengthening its preparedness and response. The evaluation of the response to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would feed into this policy.

## **VII. International protection**

65. The Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions presented the key outcomes of the 2018 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, which focused on the role of cities and municipal authorities in protecting and assisting refugees, IDPs and stateless persons in urban settings. He noted that the Dialogue recognized the important contribution of cities and their networks in achieving the objectives of the GCR. In light of the affirmation of the GCR and the outcomes of the Dialogue, the UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas from 2009 would be reviewed, in consultation with diverse stakeholders.

66. Delegates expressed appreciation for the participation of a broad range of actors in the Dialogue and the recognition by the international community of the central role of cities and local authorities in welcoming refugees and fostering inclusion. It was emphasized that local authorities and other local actors should be involved in the identification of needs of both the displaced and their host communities and in the development of comprehensive responses to ensure they were effective, sustainable and coherent across local, national and global levels. In recognition of the essential role of cities and local authorities in the implementation, follow-up and review of the GCR, UNHCR was encouraged to enable them to exchange good practices and explore ways to enhance responsibility-sharing in the context of the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.

67. The Director highlighted that the GCR encouraged collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including development actors, private sector entities and line ministries, and thus draw from more diverse data sets on refugee and host communities. This would allow for stronger needs analyses to develop more comprehensive and targeted responses. In response to a question about the impact of UNHCR's regionalization plan on engagement with cities and their networks, he noted that it would have a positive effect as it would strengthen UNHCR's presence in the field and enable closer collaboration with municipalities and regional city networks.

## VIII. Programme/protection policy

68. The Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions provided an update on the implementation of the GCR following its affirmation by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018, emphasizing that it laid out a blueprint for global efforts to ensure more inclusive and sustainable responses to refugee situations. The operational tools in the GCR, as well as the lessons learned from the application of the CRRF in the 14 roll-out countries, would guide and inform broader implementation in UNHCR operations across the globe. The Head of the Evaluation Service shared three key reflections that had emerged from the two-year progress assessment of the application of the CRRF. She asserted that while it was not yet possible to evaluate the full impact, the assessment provided evidence that positive progress had been made towards the four objectives of the GCR.

69. The Director also provided an update on the organizational arrangements for the Global Refugee Forum and confirmed the participation of the United Nations Secretary-General. The Senior Policy Adviser to the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) presented the different types of pledges and contributions that could take place and noted that UNHCR was available to provide support to States and other stakeholders in developing them.

70. Delegations welcomed the affirmation of the GCR and expressed their commitment to its implementation, including support for the preparations of the Global Refugee Forum. It was emphasized that the affirmation of the GCR was the starting point of a longer process, and a clear roadmap was needed in order to translate its commitments into action. The Committee also underscored the need for a robust set of indicators to measure progress towards achieving the objectives of the GCR and ensuring accountability. It was also important for UNHCR to share the work it had undertaken to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees with States and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis. The provision of multi-year, flexible and unarmaked funding by donors was also highlighted as an essential measure for ensuring greater predictability and continuity in refugee responses.

71. States expressed appreciation for the two-year assessment report and encouraged that the lessons learned from the application of the CRRF be used to inform the implementation of the GCR. The CRRF approach was considered an integral part of the GCR that should be mainstreamed in refugee responses worldwide. It was highlighted that the multi-stakeholder approach embedded in the CRRF had provided a platform for increased engagement with diverse stakeholders, particularly development actors, in the roll-out countries. The need for a collective understanding of the ways in which best practices related to the application of the CRRF were tracked and shared across UNHCR operations was also raised.

72. The organization of preparatory meetings for the Global Refugee Forum was welcomed. Delegations expressed appreciation for the inclusive approach that UNHCR had taken to share information about the preparations for the Forum and urged the continued sharing of ideas and information with States and other stakeholders in a transparent manner throughout the process.

73. Delegates also noted the significance of developing a diverse range of pledges and contributions that went beyond financial commitments, such as national policy measures in order to realize more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility as envisioned in the GCR. There was also a call for more concerted efforts to engage a broader range of stakeholders, including private sector entities and local governments, as such partnerships were fundamental to the implementation. It was highlighted that the co-sponsors could play an instrumental role in mobilizing political will for pledges and contributions and ensuring the success of the Forum. The need for robust monitoring and follow-up arrangements in order to track pledges and contributions made at the Forum was also raised.

74. The Director acknowledged the importance of strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and noted that there was concrete evidence of this work in the CRRF roll-out countries, where joint efforts and collaboration with development actors had benefited refugee and host communities. The GCR would further advance this. He assured delegations that the process for developing indicators for the GCR and a methodology for

measuring the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees was an open and inclusive process and that the input and contributions from States and other stakeholders were welcomed.

75. In response to questions about measuring the impact of the CRRF in the future, the Head of the Evaluation Service confirmed that work was currently underway to accomplish this and that UNHCR was also in the process of revising its RBM framework in order to measure outcomes and impact in all refugee responses. In response to a question about determining causality in future CRRF assessments, she acknowledged that the nature of a multi-stakeholder response was such that made it difficult to separate out specific interventions or actions. She reassured the Committee, however, that the availability of more evidence in the future on how different interventions led to greater impact in the lives of refugees and other persons of concern would enhance the possibility of determining causality.

76. In relation to the inclusion of refugees in the multi-stakeholder approach for the Global Refugee Forum, the Senior Policy Adviser to the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) stated that consultations on preparations for the Forum were currently underway with a number of refugee-led groups and networks. Refugee representatives had also been invited to participate in the preparatory meetings.

77. In addressing remarks about the need for the GCR to preserve the protection work of UNHCR, the Assistant High Commissioner (Protection) emphasized that protection was at the core of the GCR and that it would be reinforced through its implementation. He assured Committee members that the protection aspect of the GCR, including the three-year resettlement strategy and the asylum capacity support group, would be discussed in greater detail at the Standing Committee in June. In relation to the diversity of pledges and contributions for the Global Refugee Forum, he reiterated that the purpose of the Forum was about what States and other stakeholders could contribute to the implementation of the GCR to improve the lives of refugees and host communities.

## **IX. Any other business**

78. In line with the practice of adopting the reports of the Standing Committee meetings through an electronic circulation process, the Chairperson indicated that the report on the seventy-fourth meeting would be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated for comments by 1 April. Following a two-week review period, any comments or corrections from Member States in relation to their interventions would be incorporated, and the report would be subsequently recirculated and considered adopted.

## Annex I

### Decision on budgets and funding for 2018 and 2019

*The Standing Committee,*

*Recalling* the Executive Committee's decisions, at its sixty-eighth and sixty-ninth sessions on administrative, financial and programme matters (A/AC.96/1176, para. 14 and A/AC.96/1187, para. 13), as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the seventy-third meeting of the Standing Committee in September 2018,

*Reaffirming* the importance of responsibility-sharing in solidarity with countries hosting refugees,

*Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-eighth session, approved original programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2018-2019 biennial programme budget, amounting to \$7,508.4 million and \$7,352.3 million for 2018 and 2019 respectively;

*Recalls* that the Executive Committee, at its sixty-ninth session, approved revised programmes and budgets for regional programmes, global programmes and headquarters under UNHCR's 2018-2019 biennial programme budget (revised), amounting to \$8,275.3 million and \$8,591.1 million for 2018 and 2019 respectively;

*Notes* that the final 2018 supplementary budgets amounted to \$712.0 million for programmes benefiting UNHCR's global refugee programme, and projects for reintegration and for internally displaced persons;

*Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2018 to a final total of \$8,220.5 million, representing the sum of the original budget of \$7,508.4 million and the total supplementary budgets of \$712.0 million;

*Takes note* of the increase in UNHCR's annual budget for 2019 to a current total of \$8,698.6 million as at 31 January 2019, representing the sum of the revised budget of \$8,591.1 million and the supplementary budgets of \$107.4 million;

*Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2019 may result in the need for additional or expanded supplementary budgets and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs; and

*Urges* member States to continue to respond generously, in the spirit of solidarity and in a timely manner, to the High Commissioner's appeal for resources to meet in full the annual budget for 2019.



## Annex II

### **Decision on the revised terms of reference and criteria for membership of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee**

*The Standing Committee,*

*Having considered* the proposed revisions of the terms of reference and criteria for membership of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee as set out in Annex I of document EC/70/SC/CRP.5/Rev.1,

*Taking into account* the decisions of the High Commissioner to strengthen and streamline oversight functions in UNHCR and to seek the advice of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee in relation to the appointment of the Inspector General,

*Decides* to adopt the revised terms of reference and criteria for membership of the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee as presented in Annex I of EC/70/SC/CRP.5/Rev.1.

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