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Summary record of the 749th meeting

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Chair: Ms. Ahmed Hassan (Vice-Chair) (Djibouti)

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In the absence of Mr. Baddoura (Lebanon), Ms. Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

General debate (*continued*)

1. **Mr. Damiani Pelligrini** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking also on behalf of Algeria, Belarus, Cuba, China, Nicaragua, Syria, Yemen and Zimbabwe, and recalling that humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence were the key principles underpinning the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that it important for UNHCR to continue to support countries in formulating comprehensive, durable solutions, while addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, including refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons and internally displaced persons. It urged Member States to respect their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law and reaffirmed its condemnation of the continued political instrumentalization of international protection, refugees and migration. Unconditional respect for the inalienable right of each State to choose its political, economic, social and cultural system was an essential condition for peaceful coexistence among nations.

2. The international community and UNHCR should consider the structural causes of human mobility and, in particular, the negative consequences of illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed on developing countries. The preferred solution to most refugee situations remained voluntary repatriation; thus, fostering conditions and mobilizing support for informed, safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation must be prioritized. Measures to alleviate the suffering of refugees in large-scale movements or protracted situations must be accompanied by efforts by the international community to address the root causes of human mobility and to identify and expedite durable solutions, in accordance with the Global Compact on Refugees. Under international law and the Charter of the United Nations, political and security cooperation, diplomacy, development and the promotion and protection of human rights were fundamental to resolving protracted refugee situations and preventing new crises. He therefore called upon Member States to refrain from discriminatory action against refugees. It likewise urged the international community to take urgent and effective action to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive measures in order to ensure effective national responses to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

3. **Ms. Moreno Bau** (Spain) said that, just a year since the Executive Committee had lamented the consequences of the pandemic on refugees and forcibly displaced persons, the invasion of Ukraine had led to a major increase in the number of persons displaced globally. Her Government advocated a constructive approach to displacement, which it viewed as a shared opportunity and challenge. In that spirit, it had given priority to helping its partners to build reception and protection capacities, tackle the challenges associated with irregular migration and human trafficking networks and ensure the protection of vulnerable groups. Her Government's humanitarian efforts – totalling more than €130 million in 2022 – had included combating sexual violence and promoting the sexual and reproductive health rights of displaced persons in Ethiopia, Mali and Somalia; supporting Syrian refugees in Lebanon; and ensuring the continued learning of displaced youth in Ukraine and Moldova.

4. At home, Spanish society had demonstrated its solidarity with refugees. As a leading private donor, Spain had contributed €747 million through private individual and corporate donations since 2014. In the past two years alone, Spain had hosted more than 4,000 Afghan refugees and granted temporary protection to over 146,000 persons affected by the conflict in Ukraine, not to mention thousands of persons from other regions.

5. The world was weathering a great many crises. In addition to the impacts of climate change, an unjustified war – one involving daily, unacceptable violations of international humanitarian law – had been launched by a member of the Security Council, in flagrant violation of the Charter. Her Government roundly condemned the unjustified invasion, the illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian targets. The violation of the guiding principles of humanity must be swiftly remedied, international humanitarian law must be respected and the international community must work together to help those most in need.

6. With its European partners, Spain was endeavouring to stave off predicted levels of famine by providing €320 million in multilateral and bilateral cooperation and supporting international initiatives aimed at preventing even greater catastrophes. The figures were alarming, but behind them were people fleeing for their lives, seeking a better future. Spain wished to express its sympathy for all those who had died in the attempt and reiterate its support for UNHCR and its cause.

7. **Mr. Rezadoust** (Islamic Republic of Iran), noting that his country had been a long-standing supporter of the Office's mandate and a leading host country for refugees for decades, said that, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, his Government had spared no effort in protecting refugees and displaced persons, including by providing foreign citizens with COVID-19 vaccines, regardless of their legal status and in spite of global vaccine shortages. Among other measures, more than 700,000 students, including 380,000 undocumented Afghans, had been enrolled in public schools, and access to free public health insurance had been provided to all refugees and displaced persons. To address statelessness, a law on granting citizenship to children born of Iranian mothers and foreign fathers had been passed in 2019, benefiting 10,000 persons to date.

8. His Government had incurred exorbitant costs in hosting refugees and undocumented Afghans. Despite economic and social challenges, illegal, unfair unilateral coercive measures and sanctions, and insufficient international assistance, it had allocated national resources to meet its responsibilities. However, the situation was untenable without a meaningful increase in international assistance. A recent influx of Afghans – triggered by the United States withdrawal from Afghanistan – had had a damaging impact on host communities. Unilateral coercive measures had further compounded the situation, forcing his Government to spend its limited resources on other priorities. International support covered just 4–6 per cent of refugees' living costs. A reduction in that support was unacceptable while his Government was granting protection to refugees and undocumented Afghans. The situation of Afghans must not be overshadowed by newer international crises.

9. The best solution for Afghan refugees was voluntary repatriation. It was unacceptable to cite insecurity as an excuse for not engaging with voluntary return mechanisms. Most Afghans were economic migrants and did not have a well-founded fear of being persecuted. Measures providing for voluntary repatriation and durable solutions were therefore favoured to prevent protracted situations in host countries. His Government called upon donors and international organizations active in the field of employment and training to strengthen durable solutions, prioritize voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration, and increase their activities in Afghanistan. While the resettlement mechanism had been reactivated, the current quotas were a drop in the ocean. His Government believed in equitable responsibility-sharing without categorizing displaced persons as “good” or “bad”. Cognizant of the impediments, his Government appreciated the support of donors, international organizations and UNHCR.

10. **Mr. Malaniyom** (Thailand) said that, in addition to the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, new emergency situations had emerged over the past year, including conflicts, violence, persecution and disasters, causing a record number of forcibly displaced persons. In that context, his Government strongly believed that the principle of international burden- and responsibility-sharing must be upheld to support host communities in maintaining humanitarian assistance. The efforts of States, UNHCR and civil society to provide much-needed support and protection to persons of concern globally were appreciated.

11. For its part, Thailand had made important progress in several areas. First, in line with his country's long-standing humanitarian tradition, it had continued to care for the more than 77,000 displaced persons from Myanmar who remained in Thailand. While bilateral voluntary return mechanisms had stalled, other viable solutions were being sought. Second, it was in the process of operationalizing a national screening mechanism, paving the way towards a more systematic means of distinguishing persons in need of international protection from economic migrants. Third, following measures taken with regard to alternatives to detention for migrant children, it had released more than 300 children and their families from immigration detention centres and provided them with support in shelters. His Government was also taking steps towards withdrawing its reservation to article 22 of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child, concerning refugee children. Fourth, in an effort to end statelessness, it had approved revised criteria for the determination of legal status to accelerate the registration of approximately 400,000 affected persons and enable them to apply for permanent residency in Thailand.

12. Thailand shared the international community's concern at the situation of the Rohingya. His country maintained its policy of providing humanitarian assistance to persons in need while seeking solutions. It would continue to advocate the importance of addressing the root causes of displacement, including through constructive engagement with and cooperation among countries and partners.

13. **Mr. Szijjártó** (Hungary) said that the European Union and the European continent were facing the most serious security-related challenges since the conclusion of the Second World War. As a neighbour of Ukraine, Hungary had felt the immediate and serious effects of the war. If the tide was not turned – and soon – unimaginably serious problems lay ahead. He therefore wished to take the opportunity to call for an immediate ceasefire and for peace talks to be established as soon as possible.

14. Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Hungary had carried out the largest humanitarian operation in its history. Some 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees had already arrived in Hungary; those who stayed were provided with jobs and equal access to education and health care. His Government had decided not to deliver weapons to Ukraine; instead, it offered international humanitarian organizations safe circumstances in which to operate.

15. Owing to its geographic location, his country was not only the first safe country for refugees from Ukraine, it was also under siege at its southern border by illegal migrants. In 2022 alone, more than 200,000 illegal migrants had been stopped at the border. Moreover, a new dimension of aggression had emerged: migrants were bearing weapons and attacking and shooting at each other and the border guards. He recalled that, under international law, persons who were forced to leave their homes were entitled to stay temporarily in the first safe country. However, those arriving at his country's southern border had already crossed several safe countries. Again, international law was clear: no one had the right to violate the border between two safe countries. It was therefore a legal, not a humanitarian, issue. Violating the borders between peaceful and safe countries was a crime, as was shooting at border guards. His Government's commitment was crystal clear: it accepted refugees from Ukraine unconditionally and it protected his country's security and the security of Europe by keeping all aggressive, violent illegal migrants out of its territory.

16. He warned that if the war continued and was further escalated, refugees and migrants would increase rapidly in number, leading to severe global security challenges. His Government therefore strongly urged all the international community to refrain from further escalation and to concentrate on making peace in Ukraine.

17. **Mr. Bekkers** (Netherlands) said that 2022 had been marked by a disruptive war in Europe, which, along with many other crises and wars, had resulted in record displacement and damaged the resilience of refugees and host countries. While appreciation was owed to those hosting the forcibly displaced, gratitude was not enough. Sufficient support must be maintained for less spotlighted, but no less urgent or protracted, displacement crises, such as those in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh and Myanmar, as well as the Afghan and Syrian crises.

18. Against that backdrop, the Netherlands had increased its humanitarian contributions to record levels, from €435 million in 2021 to €512 million in 2022. His Government remained committed to providing significant multi-year, unearmarked funding, which provided UNHCR with the flexibility to respond swiftly and where the needs were highest. It called upon other donors to do the same. The Netherlands would also continue to make a proportion of its development budget available through the Prospects Partnership, a multi-stakeholder initiative that was its main funding instrument for UNHCR, to support the Office's programming across the humanitarian-development nexus.

19. On the occasion of World Mental Health Day, his Government welcomed the Executive Committee's conclusions on mental health and psychosocial support, commended the Office's integration of such support into its crisis response and advocated further efforts

in that regard. It also urged UNHCR to step up its efforts to prevent and eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in all its operations.

20. While 2022 had been a catastrophic, destabilizing and disappointing year, it had shown that the principles of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees were crucial, that the right to asylum must be upheld and that refugees must never be used as instruments for political gain. As Martin Luther King had once said: “We must accept finite disappointment but never lose infinite hope.” Reasons for hope could be found in the generosity of hosting countries, the resilience of refugees, the unwavering effort of UNHCR and the forthcoming Global Refugee Forum, where the international community had the chance to further bolster its efforts.

21. **Ms. Stasch** (Germany) said that, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had vividly described in his statement delivered the previous day, the world was facing a deeply worrying scale of displacement at the global level. The system of international protection was increasingly under pressure; fast and durable solutions to protracted refugee situations were needed.

22. The humanitarian system, which had already had to absorb the challenges of a global pandemic, now faced an immense increase in displacement owing to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Her Government strongly condemned the unjustifiable and, as the High Commissioner himself had stressed, horrific attacks by Russia against cities across Ukraine. The war had also unleashed secondary effects, increasing food insecurity and aggravating humanitarian crises worldwide.

23. Germany was a major host country and the world’s second largest humanitarian donor, with a record humanitarian budget in 2022 of €2.77 billion, including more than €400 million for UNHCR. It had also contributed more than €4 billion to combat the global food crisis and its effects. Moreover, in a spirit of solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, it had provided €440 million in additional funding to respond to emerging humanitarian needs in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries.

24. However, sharing the burden implied sharing the financial burden; more donors, larger contributions and more flexible funding were required. While the Office’s efforts to mobilize private donors were appreciated, the growing funding gap required increased efficiency and the reforms envisaged in the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing. Development actors must also strengthen their engagement in protracted displacement settings and their coordination with UNHCR.

25. While efforts to find durable solutions continued, the Office’s core protection mandate remained vital. Repeated and systematic violations of international protection standards, including through pushbacks and discrimination against certain groups, were matters of great concern. Germany would remain a steadfast supporter of the right to seek asylum and the international protection system. Her Government welcomed the Office’s efforts to integrate age, gender and diversity into all aspects of its work and its efforts to strengthen solutions for internally displaced persons, including as part of the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. While many challenges lay ahead, UNHCR could rely on her country’s continued support and close partnership.

26. **Mr. Katta** (Observer for Sierra Leone), providing an overview of the mandate of the lead agency for refugee and humanitarian protection of Sierra Leone, said that his country, a former source country of refugees, was deeply committed to providing support and protection to all refugees and displaced persons. Among other measures, his Government had enacted legislation to provide for the recognition and protection of refugees in Sierra Leone and incorporated a number of international and regional legal provisions into its national legislation, including the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. In an effort to enhance the dignity of displaced, refugee and vulnerable persons, shelters had been built, cash transfers had been disbursed and residency permits had been issued to locally integrated refugees. Steps had been taken to promote the three durable solutions – voluntary repatriation, local integration and third country resettlement – and provide land to refugees in host communities for shelter and agronomic activities.

27. To help normalize the lives of refugees, stateless persons and vulnerable persons, measures had been taken to develop a statelessness policy, provide birth certificates to persons of concern and establish an assistance framework for registered asylum-seekers, in cooperation with UNHCR. A road map had been developed for UNHCR disengagement, with a view to creating a successor to the “Thank You, Sierra Leone” (Tenke Salone) project in order to compensate host communities for implementing socioeconomic infrastructure projects and opportunities for refugees.

28. Despite the critical successes achieved in his country, a number of challenges persisted. For example, almost 400 refugees continued to refuse to accept local integration or voluntary repatriation, in the hope of third country resettlement programmes for which they had repeatedly been determined ineligible. In addition, the Tenke Salone project had been discontinued owing to a lack of funding, even though the humanitarian imperative remained. With that in mind, he appealed to UNHCR and other development partners to make the critical investments needed to resume the project’s full-scale implementation. He also called upon the international community to support processes to strengthen the international, regional and national human rights regimes and mechanisms, such as the universal periodic review and the African Peer Review Mechanism, which held the promise of mitigating some of the root causes that triggered wars and caused otherwise peaceful and thriving citizens to become refugees or displaced persons.

29. **Mr. Manley** (United Kingdom) said that the Executive Committee was meeting at a critical juncture, with armed conflict, violence, persecution and economic uncertainty on the rise globally. Over 300 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance and more than 100 million persons had been forcibly displaced; the humanitarian system alone could not respond to such shocking figures. The enormous generosity of host nations and communities was to be applauded, as was the steadfast dedication of UNHCR and its staff. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and conflict had created the worst food security crisis in more than a generation. More needed to be done – and now – to break the cycle of famine.

30. He wished to join others in expressing his horror and incredulity at the latest atrocities committed in Ukraine, where strikes had been carried out on civilian targets for no purpose other than to spread terror. The aggression had already displaced some 14 million people, left almost 18 million in need of humanitarian assistance and worsened food insecurity globally.

31. For its part, his Government had taken life-saving action, pledging to provide more than £150 million to East Africa, including to meet urgent needs in Somalia, and over £50 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund. In a new international development strategy, the Government had set out its long-standing commitment to humanitarian work, seeking to prioritize humanitarian assistance to people in greatest need, protect those most at risk in conflict and crises and prevent and anticipate future shocks. It also planned to contribute £3 billion to global humanitarian needs over the next three years.

32. The United Kingdom was strongly committed to supporting persons of concern globally. It had continued to provide significant levels of multi-year, unearmarked funding to UNHCR, contributing over \$100 million in 2022. His Government commended the Office’s efforts at reform, welcomed the changes already achieved and applauded its endeavours to expand its donor base. UNHCR must seize the opportunity to build on those new partnerships. Lastly, his Government looked forward to the second Global Refugee Forum, which was an opportunity to ensure the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and find practical, long-term solutions for persons of concern and their host communities.

33. **Ms. Al-Muftah** (Observer for Qatar) said that, for the tenth consecutive year, there had been a worrying increase in the number of persons internally displaced owing to human rights violations and conflict. The international community must work together to tackle the root causes of internal displacement and refugee situations without resorting to politicization, find durable solutions and improve responses to natural disasters and climate change. It must redouble its efforts to protect refugees and internally displaced persons from the risks of death and exploitation, enable them to live dignified lives and provide host communities with greater levels of development and humanitarian assistance and support.

34. A just solution for Palestinian refugees based on international law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly was needed. As a leading contributor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), her Government called for more support to enable UNRWA to fulfil its mandate.

35. On the basis of international solidarity and cooperation, her Government had strengthened its strategic partnerships and coordinated its efforts with a number of international institutions to support refugees around the world, including by providing medical support, implementing development projects and providing job opportunities for young people. Qatar had also hosted thousands of Afghan refugees, facilitated the reunification of 260,000 unaccompanied children and provided \$5 million in humanitarian assistance for Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons.

36. To strengthen her Government's strategic partnership with UNHCR, a country office had been opened in Qatar to facilitate coordination and cooperation. Qatar had continued to provide significant financial assistance and, through mediation, it had helped end a number of conflicts and brokered peace agreements, with a view to limiting the flow of refugees and internally displaced persons. It stood ready to provide UNHCR with the support needed to fully implement its mandate.

37. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that, in response to the statement by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, he agreed that voluntary repatriation in safety and with dignity remained the best solution to refugee situations. Nevertheless, successful and sustainable voluntary repatriation could only be achieved through cooperation on the part of the country of origin and the receiving country. UNHCR stood ready to assist in that regard. He likewise agreed that discrimination against refugees and migrants must be avoided, as he had made clear in his own statement delivered the previous day. Sanctions and similar measures, which were a political issue and beyond the mandate of the Office, should not impede humanitarian aid; if they did, UNHCR could raise the issue with the relevant States or institutions.

38. He thanked the Government of Spain for its support of UNHCR and underscored the contribution of Spanish civil society. It was hoped that the Spanish Government would be able to maintain its level of contributions. It was important to continue supporting public policies for inclusion of refugees, as Spain had done. Close cooperation would be useful, especially in the light of the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, during which Spain would hold the presidency of the Council of the European Union.

39. The generous and strong support of the Netherlands was to be commended, as was its championing of unearmarked contributions. The Prospects Partnership had proved to be a valuable form of cooperation, providing financial support to projects focused on the humanitarian-development nexus. He welcomed the emphasis on mental health and agreed that the Office must remain vigilant about sexual exploitation and abuse. He assured Member States that the Office was committed to preventing and ultimately eradicating that scourge.

40. He thanked the representative of Germany for expressing her country's political and financial support. Germany was one of the main countries of asylum for Ukrainian refugees. It also had some of the best examples of integration that could be replicated elsewhere. He welcomed the increased contributions of the United Kingdom and the country's allocation of significant resources to crucial priority areas, including in East Africa. He hoped that some of those resources would go to host countries and refugee programmes. It was important not to lose sight of displacement issues amid other problems, such as climate change and food insecurity.

41. He appreciated the reception given to Ukrainian refugees by the Government of Hungary. However, the distinction made by the representative of Hungary with respect to those seeking asylum from areas other than Europe, namely non-Ukrainians, was a form of discrimination that he had addressed in his opening statement. If refugees and asylum-seekers were carrying weapons, there were laws in place to deal with such situations; nevertheless, he considered it very dubious to suggest that all such persons were carrying weapons.

42. He thanked the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its long-standing partnership with the Office and recognized the country's role as a host country for many

refugees, including those from Afghanistan, which continued to be a priority area of focus for UNHCR. In a visit to the country in December 2021, he had seen for himself the important work that was being done. In that regard, the Office had mobilized additional staff and resources to support the refugee response in the Islamic Republic of Iran. As he had said, voluntary repatriation was indeed a very important part of the solution. While conditions in Afghanistan were not necessarily conducive to large-scale returns, there was a programme in place to assist those who wished to return voluntarily.

43. He commended the Government of Qatar for its help and support, in particular with regard to the situation in Afghanistan. He also welcomed the Government's financial contributions, emphasizing that Qatar was not only a major donor but also the only country in the subregion to make annual unearmarked contributions to UNHCR. As a former Commissioner-General of UNRWA, he wholeheartedly agreed with the call for UNRWA to be well funded.

44. Thailand was another country with which UNHCR had a long history of cooperation. He welcomed the progress being made with regard to alternatives to detention, in particular for children, and considered that the Government's withdrawal of its reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child would be a very important step. Lastly, he noted the clear message that had been shared by the representative of Sierra Leone and assured him that UNHCR would follow up on the issue. The focus by the Government of Sierra Leone on refugee integration and other solutions, including long-term measures, was very welcome.

45. **Mr. Chuquihuara Chil** (Peru) said that, in the face of the increasing number of persons forcibly displaced owing to wars, economic crises and the effects of climate change, Peru had maintained its unwavering commitment to protecting the most vulnerable persons, promoting their inclusion in a democratic society based on the principles of equality and justice. In that spirit of solidarity, it had welcomed 1.2 million Venezuelans into its territory, more than half of whom had applied for refugee status. It was an enormous challenge for a developing country that was still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, his Government had assumed its responsibilities, providing access to health-care services and education and adopting administrative and budgetary measures aimed at guaranteeing the exercise of the rights of refugees and migrants.

46. Against that backdrop, Peru had relied on and received the valuable support of UNHCR and its country office. Moreover, a cooperation agreement had been signed through which UNHCR was providing resources aimed at capacity-building and developing a system to standardize and streamline the process of verifying and evaluating refugee applications. In line with its international obligations, Peru would continue to provide assistance and protection to refugees and migrants in the country. Nevertheless, the Government considered that new mechanisms of support aimed at strengthening existing durable solutions should be evaluated. Given the rise in voluntary repatriations, it was important to ensure that measures were in place to support the reintegration of persons who opted to return to their home country. However, to bring durable solutions to fruition, shared responsibility for humanitarian crises – and the population flows they generated – was crucial, as was support for host countries. Lastly, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to working towards solutions to the diverse challenges faced by Venezuelan refugees and migrants and called upon international partners and other actors, in particular UNHCR, to continue to play their fundamental role.

47. **Ms. Norton** (Canada) said that the unjustifiable aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, including the current deplorable attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, had led not only to unprecedented rates of forced displacement in Europe but also to high levels of food insecurity. Such crises demonstrated the imperative of a coordinated response and solidarity among States. It must become the norm to support the many underfunded humanitarian crises around the world, including in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. As support for one crisis should not be to the detriment of others, Canada had adopted a needs-based approach to humanitarian assistance, supplementing its support for Ukraine with support for other crises throughout the world.

48. As the growth in humanitarian needs continued to outpace available resources, Canada encouraged UNHCR to strengthen coordination with other humanitarian actors and,

in particular, to implement the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Internal Displacement.

49. It was important, in recognition of the pressures placed on host countries and communities, to promote more equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing. Canada called on the international community to remain committed to the fundamental principles that underpinned the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Global Compact on Refugees. It also encouraged Member States to guarantee the right to seek asylum.

50. Given the importance of a regional response to the development of durable solutions to forced displacement, Canada was proud to serve as Chair of the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework (MIRPS) Support Platform and to welcome the World Bank as its newest member.

51. More consistent political leadership and dialogue were urgently needed to address the root causes of humanitarian crises. With a view to adopting durable and rights-based solutions, Canada encouraged Member States to promote synergies between humanitarian assistance, development aid and peace operations. Her Government encouraged UNHCR, as the lead agency of the Global Protection Cluster in humanitarian crises, to draw attention to the specific needs of women and girls and of persons facing discrimination on the ground of their sexual orientation and gender identity. It also urged the international community to prioritize the meaningful participation of refugees. It continued to collaborate with refugee-run organizations, particularly through its Learning Together refugee education initiative. In addition, she urged the Member States of the Executive Committee to strongly support UNHCR and the global response to refugees and displaced persons. It was essential to unite in order to build a more just and equitable future based on dignity and compassion for all.

52. **Mr. Dushime** (Canada) said that substantive refugee engagement could and should be used to promote a more equitable, effective and efficient international refugee regime. Canada commended Member States that had included refugee advisers in their delegations and strongly encouraged others to follow suit. It was essential to take practical steps to hear the voices of refugees and to adopt a human rights-based approach.

53. **Mr. Sougouri** (Burkina Faso) said that his country appreciated its cooperation with UNHCR since 2015 in the context of a precarious security situation involving numerous terrorist attacks. The number of internally displaced persons was currently estimated at more than 1,520,012. In addition, the authorities had registered 28,437 refugees and 571 asylum-seekers. Burkina Faso relied on the support of humanitarian organizations to ensure victims' survival and respect for their dignity.

54. Measures taken during 2022 had included registration of refugees and asylum-seekers, issuance of biometric identity cards for refugees, awareness-raising procedures for personnel responsible for issuing civil status documents, and organization of public events to promote the issuance of birth certificates for children of refugees born in Burkina Faso. Awareness-raising activities had also been undertaken in training centres for internal security forces to improve the quality of reception at the country's borders and to ensure that cases were addressed in line with existing standards.

55. The Government's 2022–2025 Action Plan for internally displaced persons accorded priority to their security and recovery. However, the mobilization of resources remained a challenge. Only 26 per cent of the \$805 million required for the humanitarian response plan had been mobilized. Burkina Faso therefore launched an urgent appeal for contributions by the humanitarian community to assist in addressing multiple challenges and in providing sustainable social and economic development for its population, especially in light of the large number of internally displaced persons who had entered certain urban and suburban areas since 2016. It appreciated in that context the action taken by UNHCR and its partners to promote peaceful coexistence between different communities.

56. It was essential not only to improve the operational capacities of national mechanisms but also to promote inter-State collaboration with a view to sharing experiences and ensuring a joint and harmonious approach to the management of challenges. Burkina Faso was prepared to build multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to find durable solutions for persons falling within the UNHCR mandate.

57. His country was endeavouring to incorporate the provisions of international treaties into its domestic legislation. The Persons and Family Code was currently being amended to include a chapter on the issue of statelessness, and the legal framework for the protection of refugees was being reviewed in collaboration with UNHCR.

58. **Mr. Bichler** (Luxembourg) said that the rights of refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons under international law were frequently curbed or deliberately denied in many parts of the world, and the rights and obligations enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees were frequently challenged.

59. Luxembourg supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine and strongly condemned the annexation of four Ukrainian regions and the bombardment of civilian areas. Older persons, persons with disabilities, women and children were severely affected by the war. It was essential to respect international humanitarian law.

60. More than 100 million people throughout the world had been forcibly displaced. Food insecurity and rising energy prices together with disasters stemming from climate change could exacerbate displacement risks. The situation in Afghanistan, spiralling insecurity in the Sahel region and food insecurity in the Horn of Africa highlighted the need for durable solutions. It was essential to adopt a holistic approach to migration based on legal pathways, resettlement opportunities and solidarity.

61. His Government welcomed the resolute action taken by its humanitarian partners, particularly UNHCR, to meet the constantly increasing needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, displaced persons and stateless persons throughout the world. It noted with concern in that context the proposed UNHCR budget of \$10.2 billion for 2023 and the expectation that Europe would be required to host the largest increase in refugees by 2023.

62. Noting that UNHCR might be required to reduce its provision of protection and assistance by 25 per cent in the coming year, Luxembourg underscored its intention to display solidarity with persons of concern to UNHCR. During the period from 2022 to 2025, it would support the UNHCR budget with €32 million, three quarters of which would be flexible funding. In addition, the “emergency.lu” satellite-based telecommunications platform was used to restore communications for UNHCR and its partners and to facilitate the delivery of basic services to refugee camps.

63. Luxembourg was pleased to hear that the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges in 2022 would focus on development cooperation and looked forward to sharing its experience in that regard. It also appreciated the increased attention given to mental health and psychosocial support and fully supported the adoption of the Executive Committee’s conclusions.

64. **Mr. Chen Xu** (China) said that the global number of refugees and internally displaced persons exceeded 100 million for the first time in history, leading to new security and development challenges, which required a global solution. All countries should uphold multilateralism and support the role of UNHCR and other multilateral agencies in addressing the refugee issue and providing humanitarian aid. Concrete measures should be taken to implement the Global Compact on Refugees. It was also imperative to address the symptoms and root causes of the refugee issue, such as wars, conflicts and poverty, to integrate refugees into national development and economic recovery plans, and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to create enabling conditions for post-war reconstruction, refugee repatriation and their local integration into society.

65. More than 80 per cent of refugees were currently hosted in developing countries, which faced increasing pressure and challenges. Developed countries should invest more resources in the construction and development of the countries concerned and provide more support for refugees.

66. When dealing with refugee issues, the international community and UNHCR should uphold objectivity and impartiality and the guiding principles of humanitarian action. It was important to abandon double standards and politicization, and to avoid turning the international refugee protection system into a means of intervention into other countries’ internal affairs or a means of protecting terrorists from prosecution.

67. As a permanent member of the Security Council and a State party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, China played a constructive role in addressing refugee issues and assisting countries of origin to achieve lasting peace. It also actively promoted international cooperation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic by providing equipment, sharing experience and providing over 120 countries and international organizations with 2.2 billion doses of vaccines. China provided assistance to Afghanistan, South Sudan, Iraq, Ukraine, Myanmar and other countries as well as UNHCR through bilateral or multilateral channels. It supported African countries' efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic through the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund.

68. **Ms. Neocleous** (Cyprus) said that innovative solutions and sustained and concerted action would be required to address the unprecedented levels of global forced displacement triggered by armed conflict, climate change, food insecurity, persecution and human rights violations.

69. The unjustified and illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia had caused the worst displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Over 11 million arrivals in the European Union had been recorded since the beginning of the war. Cyprus had hosted tens of thousands of Ukrainians seeking temporary protection, which was the second highest per capita number in the European Union.

70. Cyprus fully complied with its obligations under international law to provide asylum to persons in need, while guarding the European Union's external borders and tackling criminal smuggling networks. For five consecutive years, it had been the European Union member State with the highest number of first-time applications for international protection in relation to its population. Its proximity to theatres of conflict and the 180-km-long ceasefire line within the territory of Cyprus were exploited by those who chose to instrumentalize the migration crisis. More than 90 per cent of persons arriving in Cyprus had been deliberately encouraged to cross the buffer zone into areas effectively controlled by the Government of Cyprus.

71. Notwithstanding the challenges, Cyprus would continue to comply fully with its international obligations and the Global Compact on Refugees. It was seeking to optimize and expedite the process of examining applications for international protection and accorded top priority to the integration of refugees and the reception of asylum-seekers. Additional refugee reception centres were being established. Asylum-seekers, especially women and girls and possible victims of torture, had free access to health care, including mental health-care services. Vocational training programmes were also a key component of the country's integration policy.

72. Cyprus continued to advocate for an agreement to be reached on the new pact on migration and asylum proposed by the European Commission, which would facilitate the effective, fair and coordinated management of migration based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility.

73. Cyprus greatly appreciated UNHCR support for improvements in its reception facilities, and assistance for voluntary returns, reunification of families, provision of support for unaccompanied minors and enhancement of integration.

74. **Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve** (Belgium) said that his Government had responded, with its European partners, to the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Ukraine, but the Government had decided that the resources allocated to Ukraine would not encroach on the funds allocated to other crises. The country's humanitarian programmes in Africa and Asia had therefore remained in 2022 at the same level as in 2021. Belgium had also maintained the flexibility of its humanitarian budget. As 66 per cent, on average, of its contributions were flexible, its humanitarian partners could react speedily to crises and devote funds to less visible crises.

75. He was pleased to note that part of his country's increased financial support for UNHCR had been used for a climate change intervention in the United Republic of Tanzania. Given the multiple recent crises related to climate change, particularly in Pakistan and the Horn of Africa, it was essential to prepare for future crises by investing more in prevention and resilience.

76. While the new results-based approach made the document containing the proposed UNHCR budget for 2023 easier to read, it still lacked quantitative data on results, target baselines and achievements. He hoped that more data on the performance of UNHCR would be provided in future budget documents.

77. A number of host countries had urged the international community to take more vigorous action to promote the voluntary return of refugees. UNHCR should therefore consider ways and means of ensuring that not only refugees but also the populations of host countries benefited from humanitarian aid, especially during protracted and complex crises. Sustainable solutions would require access to basic services for all residents of the host country and measures to facilitate the integration of refugees into society. UNHCR should also play the role of a neutral humanitarian actor when facilitating the return of refugees and should ensure, in particular, that the conditions for a safe, voluntary and dignified return were fully respected.

78. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) commended Peru for being among the top countries to host refugees from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. It fully deserved the support of the international community. UNHCR would continue to discuss the vital issue of voluntary return with host countries such as Peru and with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

79. He thanked Canada for its financial support for UNHCR and acknowledged its pioneering role in promoting complementary pathways and in mobilizing resources. A recent meeting in New York of the MIRPS Support Platform had proved highly beneficial for taking stock of the mechanism's effectiveness. He also commended Canada for advocating the meaningful participation of refugees and hoped that other countries would follow suit.

80. UNHCR was deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso. Displacements were increasing and urban services were overburdened by the fact that most displaced persons moved to urban areas. It was currently difficult to implement the tripartite agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Malian refugees living in Burkina Faso. More resources were needed to address humanitarian problems and it was difficult to obtain access to persons in distress. One could only hope for an alleviation of the situation so that humanitarian action could be effectively resumed.

81. He agreed with the recommendation by China to support multilateral action and to address the root causes of the refugee issue. UNHCR firmly rejected politicization, but the highly politicized environment in which it operated presented major challenges. He looked forward to a continuous dialogue with China on how to provide increased assistance to developing countries that hosted refugees.

82. He commended Cyprus on hosting many refugees, including from Ukraine, as well as asylum-seekers and migrants. He also shared its view on the importance of the proposed pact on migration and asylum, particularly for countries on the borders of the European Union, as a means of sharing the burden more equitably.

83. He thanked Luxembourg for its pluriannual funding, which was almost as important as unearmarked funding. The proposed UNHCR budget for 2023 presented a major challenge and the International Monetary Fund had just published a grim forecast for the year ahead. He hoped that the impact on the humanitarian budget would not be too severe and that member States would provide the requisite assistance. The partnership of Luxembourg in terms of technology and satellite communication was of great importance for UNHCR.

84. He welcomed the commitment of Belgium to provide flexible financial contributions. The United Republic of Tanzania attached great importance to the support provided to mitigate the impact on its environment of the inflow of refugees from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He hoped that such action would serve as a model for other member States at the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

85. He admitted that there were still some shortcomings in the results-based approach to the budget. However, he trusted that the impact of the methodology would be maximized in the years ahead and that the impact of donor country contributions would be more discernible.

86. **Mr. Constant Rosales** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country's long-standing tradition of welcoming refugees was reflected by the State's respect for the legal safeguards that protected them and their access to public services on an equal footing with Venezuelans and free legal assistance. His Government was concerned that the conflation of "refugee", "asylum-seeker" and "migrant", including by political leaders, the media and high-level officials from international bodies, led to the misuse of the legal frameworks that governed the work of UNHCR. Similarly, his Government objected to the creation of new categories of persons of concern, such as "Venezuelans displaced abroad", a category that was as ill-defined as it was dangerous in its legal consequences. His Government welcomed the fact that UNHCR appeared to be using that category less frequently.

87. According to a recent UNHCR report, there were 6.8 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants globally, of whom 200,000 had been recognized as refugees and 970,000 had submitted asylum applications. If those figures were correct – although his Government believed them not to be – he wondered what the status of the remaining 5.6 million was; if they were economic migrants, UNHCR should explain why it continued to include them in refugee figures and request additional resources for them. His Government was willing to discuss the management of those data. It was regrettable that UNHCR had failed to refer to the illegal and criminal unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that were the root cause of Venezuelan economic migration, or to the "Return to the Homeland" (Vuelta a la Patria) Plan, which should be considered a good practice. Nevertheless, his Government was ready to strengthen its dialogue and cooperation with UNHCR.

88. **Mr. Johnson** (Togo) said that Togo remained committed to seeking appropriate solutions to assist refugees. His Government's durable solutions for Ivorian refugees included the facilitation of voluntary repatriation and local integration, and it had piloted a regional scheme to issue identity documents to them. He commended the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for coordinating follow-up to a regional road map and cooperating in the integration process for Ivorians, who could retain their refugee status in Togo if they met the relevant criteria.

89. His Government had provided the best possible assistance to persons displaced by the security and humanitarian crisis in the Sahel and, with the support of UNHCR, undertook regular monitoring at the border and had drawn up a contingency plan. It was also in the process of granting nationality to 1,000 refugees. He welcomed the growing contribution of the private sector to the response to ongoing humanitarian crises, as well as the maintained or increased financial contributions of several member States. Refugees must receive equitable, non-discriminatory treatment, regardless of origin.

90. **Mr. Moerzinger Pagani** (Uruguay) said that, against a backdrop of an alarming increase in forcibly displaced persons, the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and military aggression, his Government reaffirmed its support for the work of UNHCR, in particular its rapid, innovative response to the 40 emergency situations that had begun in the past year. Latin America and the Caribbean was among the regions most affected by forced displacement, and coordination with UNHCR and the work of national and regional mechanisms constituted the most effective route to comprehensive, durable solutions. Uruguay therefore welcomed the work of UNHCR in the region, particularly its Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan.

91. Multilateral dialogue, international solidarity and shared responsibility were required urgently if sustainable solutions to the many ongoing global challenges were to be found, and the numerous encouraging examples of such action in his region demonstrated that displacement could be addressed in a coordinated manner. Despite the complex global situation, Uruguay remained committed to assisting those in urgent need of protection, as illustrated by the inclusion of refugees in its COVID-19 response. Uruguay required the support of the international community to implement its new resettlement plans, and it had therefore established a mechanism for receiving specialist technical assistance and cooperation. The private sector, academia, civil society and non-governmental organizations all played a vital role in identifying comprehensive solutions to human displacement.

92. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that the considerable increase in forcibly displaced persons in Cameroon placed significant pressure on the State's already stretched financial resources. His Government provided durable solutions for more than 477,000 refugees, including significant numbers from the Central African Republic and Nigeria. Cameroon had hosted the Regional Ministerial Conference on Solutions in the Context of Forced Displacement related to the Central African Crisis, and the resulting Yaoundé Declaration set out specific recommendations on refugee reception, registration, integration and voluntary repatriation.

93. The excellent cooperation between the Government and UNHCR had allowed it to adopt numerous measures to assist refugees, including consultation on a national refugee management structure, the provision of official biometric documents to refugees, their inclusion in local development programmes and the strengthening of the health system to afford them access to health care. A holistic approach must be adopted by multilateral and national actors, as well as civil society, to resolve international humanitarian problems.

94. **Mr. Tibaleka** (Uganda) said that Uganda remained committed to refugee protection amid increasing forced displacement in the region and diminishing financial support. The country hosted more than 1.5 million refugees and continued to experience new influxes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. That situation required the verification of refugee numbers in order to guide planning and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing, support for the provision of shelter and funding to establish new refugee settlements. The Ugandan refugee response had been severely underfunded for several years, and the Government was deeply concerned that funding continued to fall despite the current influx. Its generosity and open policies should not be taken for granted in the light of new refugee situations elsewhere in the world, and refugees must not receive different treatment based on location or race. Furthermore, emergency humanitarian needs must not be forgotten. He therefore called on the international community not to forget States, like his own, that were long-standing hosts of refugees and to guarantee fair burden- and responsibility-sharing.

95. The refugee crisis was a cause of environmental degradation, and he urged donors and development partners to follow the lead of the World Bank in funding alternative energy projects, as well as forest protection measures. Support was required for voluntary repatriation and peace initiatives in his region that would enable refugees to return home. Third-country resettlement would also ease pressure on host countries and was possible only if States opened their borders to refugees and ensured safe pathways and resettlement opportunities.

96. **Mr. Baddoura** (Lebanon) said that it was incumbent upon member States to ensure that the significant challenges faced by UNHCR were matched by moral and financial support. Protracted conflicts were harming the collective security system, multilateralism and the global economy, contributing to a worrying increase in forcibly displaced persons and, at the same time, a decrease in the number and scope of durable solutions. In the absence of serious action by the international community, the major humanitarian challenges and pressure on host communities caused by those trends could pave the way for yet more crises. Member States must therefore renew their commitment to multilateralism and the Global Compact on Refugees, paying more than lip service to burden and responsibility sharing and durable solutions, and increasing efforts, resource mobilization and concrete action.

97. For more than a decade, Lebanon had borne the brunt of a displacement crisis affecting countries neighbouring the Syrian Arab Republic. While his Government was committed to providing protection and basic services to displaced Syrians, the situation had become untenable, accelerating the acute economic and financial crisis ravaging Lebanon. Despite the consequent extreme poverty in host and refugee communities alike, international support remained insufficient, and the UNHCR budget and Lebanon Crisis Response Plan appeal were underfunded. Since the inception of that plan, host communities' vulnerability had increased steadily, leading many persons to risk their lives along illegal migration routes.

98. The presence of 1.5 million displaced persons in Lebanon was taking a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, security and employment opportunities; an urgent paradigm shift was required. The comments of the High Commissioner gave hope that UNHCR would assist

in devising new approaches to reverse those trends and curb the abuse of the current system. He called on UNHCR to scale up its cooperation with the competent Lebanese authorities to resolve the situation transparently. Given the impossibility of integrating Syrian refugees into communities in Lebanon, a durable solution to the crisis depended on the removal of the barriers to their return to the many parts of the Syrian Arab Republic that were safe.

99. **Mr. Grandi** (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) said that he agreed that burden- and responsibility-sharing required more than lip service; the Global Refugee Forum would provide an opportunity for serious discussion of the matter. The underfunding of the refugee response in Lebanon, and the situation in the country in general, were cause for concern, and UNHCR had opened up constructive dialogue with the Government and would continue to discuss the concrete proposals that it had made. Nevertheless, international support was required to tackle the fundamental issues underpinning the Syrian refugee crisis.

100. He had witnessed similar issues during his visits to Uganda, as well as the excellent work undertaken by the Government there to maintain open refugee policies in the face of challenges. He urged donors to support UNHCR efforts in the country, where the mobilization of significant development resources had nevertheless been insufficient to outweigh the funding shortfall. UNCHR remained committed to supporting the refugee response in Cameroon. The principles of the Yaoundé declaration must be acted upon to make progress towards solutions to the refugee situation in Central Africa. He welcomed the participation of Togo in collective efforts to resolve the situation of refugees from Côte d'Ivoire. Given the instability in West Africa, vigilance was required regarding possible migration flows from other directions.

101. He wished to extend his condolences for the recent loss of life in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela owing to flooding; UNHCR was working to provide humanitarian assistance in the affected areas. It was important to recall the Venezuelan tradition of welcoming refugees. His meetings with the Venezuelan Government to discuss the matter of data and terminology had been constructive, and UNHCR stood ready to engage in further dialogue. He welcomed the reference made by Uruguay to regional frameworks, which played an important role in coordinating the response to displacement crises. The country's commitment to resettlement was commendable, and effort would be made to mobilize resources to establish new resettlement plans.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.