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

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**Standing Committee**

**Ninetieth meeting**

**1-2 July 2024**

Held at the International Conference Centre (CICG), Geneva

**Summary record,\* Tuesday, 2 July 2024, at 3.05 p.m.**

*Chairperson: Ms. Katharina Stasch ..... (Germany)*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

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

##### **(a) UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons**

1. The **Principal Advisor on Internal Displacement** (UNHCR), introducing the sub-item, said that in spite of the Office's significant advances and achievements in engaging with internally displaced persons in previous years, the total number remaining displaced by the end of 2023 had increased to an estimated 63 million; that the Sudan was currently the country with the largest population of internally displaced persons in the world, with a reported 9.1 million, followed by the Syrian Arab Republic with 7.2 million, Colombia with 6.9 million and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 6.7 million; and that factoring in those displaced in the context of disasters would take the total figure globally to an estimated 76 million.

2. While it recognized that States bore the primary responsibility for providing protection and solutions for internally displaced persons, UNHCR, together with fellow United Nations agencies and other partners, played a supporting role. With visibility on internal displacement issues having increased over the course of 2024 and internally displaced persons now higher on the agenda across the international community, a number of recent initiatives had highlighted the need to further improve coordination and predictability in humanitarian responses. The recent Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement and ongoing Emergency Relief Coordinator's flagship initiative had underscored the need to systematically place internally displaced persons at the centre of humanitarian actions, in coordination with national actors and through a protection-centred response; efforts to achieve long-term solutions for the internally displaced under the Secretary General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement had sought to ensure that they were nationally owned; and to that end, the Office had continued to work with States to develop relevant legal and public policy frameworks on internal displacement and local approaches to solutions.

3. UNHCR had also reviewed its modus operandi to see what further could be strengthened and how better to prioritize. The Office's policy on engagement in situations of internal displacement had laid the foundations for such engagement across the Office's operations, bureaux and at headquarters; the recent independent evaluation on its response to internal displacement had provided guidance for refining its position through recommendations protection and solutions-centred recommendations; and, further guided by the UNHCR Strategic Directions 2022–2026, the Office was finalizing a five-year strategic plan on engagement with internally displaced persons. That plan, in addition to setting out the global road map for predictable action, would ensure clarity as to the Office's role in various operating settings, provide technical guidelines on prioritization and centre on internally displaced person-led action and accountability to affected populations.

4. UNHCR recognized that it was not alone in its efforts to ensure protection and achieve solutions for internally displaced persons. Reaffirming its commitment to the Secretary General's Action Agenda, the Office would strive to support resident and humanitarian coordinators and strengthen partnerships, to which end it had developed a newly developed protection risk assessment tool designed to provide evidence-based guidance to ensure a protection-informed solutions approach. To strengthen the Office's predictability, its coordination and contribution through its leadership within the three clusters – protection, camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) and shelter – remained paramount. The Global Protection Cluster had recently held discussions to strengthen the overall protection response in operations, localization, advocacy and transition; with 40 per cent of the internally displaced still on internal displacement sites by the end of 2023, the CCCM cluster had continued to respond through a conflict-sensitive approach, exploring alternatives to camps and supporting solutions from the outset; and the Office's shelter cluster aimed to promote integrated housing approaches to preparedness and response while advocating for recovery and solutions, such as in Ukraine, where it had drafted a position paper to strengthen interlinkages between humanitarian and durable-housing solutions.

5. To successfully implement those initiatives, the quality of data to inform the decision-making – including socioeconomic data and on the intentions of internally displaced persons – was key. Capitalizing on its extensive experience, UNHCR would continue to strengthen the evidence base

through its partnerships with the World Bank, the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement and the Joint Internally Displaced Person Profiling Service (JIPS) as well as other partners. As a part of the strengthening of nationally-owned data, the Office's work with the Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS) and the implementation of the International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics remains a priority.

6. Moving forward, it was crucial to collectively build on what had been proven to work on the ground, amplifying the successes and promoting nationally-owned actions in support of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Success was measured not just in numbers but in the extent to which it enabled the internally displaced to participate as rights holders in all aspects of life and to build their own futures.

7. The representative of the **European Union** (group statement), expressing deep concern that the numbers of internally displaced persons had continued to rise to previously unheard of levels, reaffirmed the commitment of the European Union and its member States to advancing progress on the three interlinked goals of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: to help internally displaced persons to find a durable solution to their displacement; to better prevent new displacement crises from emerging; and to ensure that those facing displacement received effective protection and assistance.

8. The European Union and its member States, which remained among the world's leading donors in situations of forced displacement, including internal displacement, called on others to urgently step up their contributions and commended those that had recently done so and those that had advanced solutions. Expressing their support for the transition from emergency assistance to durable solutions, in line with the Action Agenda and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, they welcomed the Office's partnership-based approach to continued engagement with internally displaced persons in increasingly challenging settings, such as in a future consultation on the strategic plan for protection and solutions for internally displaced persons.

9. More information would be appreciated on how UNHCR was implementing the recommendations of the recent IASC review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement and how it would leverage its comparative advantage to promote protection for the internally displaced; enhance needs-based programming; ensure transparent criteria for its prioritization efforts; and establish clear boundaries for its role in working towards durable solutions in partnership with other stakeholders.

10. The European Union and its member States urged UNHCR, as a member of the United Nations' Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement and key stakeholder of the Action Agenda, to do its utmost, hand-in-hand with host-country governments, to ensure that the United Nations system continued the efforts spearheaded by the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement over the previous two years beyond the end of his mandate, and to ensure that the gains made to date were cemented and embedded in the system-wide work on internal displacement. The European Union and its member States encouraged UNHCR to build strong partnerships to that end with the other members of the Steering Group, particularly the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and requested that it provide further clarification of how regular reporting would be ensured, such as at future meetings of the Standing Committee.

11. The representative of **Burkina Faso** noted with interest the references in document EC/75/SC/CRP.15 to UNHCR actions to address internal displacement in his country by contributing to the reform of the legislative and policy frameworks and the development of a joint action plan to advance inclusion and durable solutions for displaced and stateless populations. His delegation commended the Office for its initiatives and partnerships to find such solutions and welcomed its emphasis on – and leadership in advocating – the centrality of protection in humanitarian action in all crisis situations, including natural disasters.

12. Internal displacement situations in his country and the wider central Sahel region stemmed from persistent terrorist attacks and environmental degradation due to climate change and, in spite of his Government's extensive efforts, nearly 2 million people had continued to suffer the harsh realities of such situations. The coordinated actions of the Government and its partners, including UNHCR, had thankfully led a total of 716,723 returnees – representing 113,251 households in 524

localities – having been registered by the end of the previous month. Their reintegration called for urgent and concerted efforts to establish sound durable solutions through the humanitarian-peace-development nexus approach. The support of UNHCR and all humanitarian actors was key to bridging the \$33.5 million funding gap preventing the implementation of his country's 2024 national humanitarian response plan, through which some 3.5 million persons could receive the assistance that they needed. His country also counted on the Office's engagement to strengthen its data collection capacity on internally displaced persons and host communities so as to better inform the humanitarian response plan and identify durable solutions for poverty reduction.

13. His delegation paid tribute to UNHCR and its teams in the field for their commitment and tireless efforts to deliver on the Office's mandate in his country, regardless of the security difficulties, and it reaffirmed the country's commitment, in turn, to cooperating with them to better assist the internally displaced and vulnerable persons that they served.

14. The representative of **Switzerland** said that the update on UNHCR engagement with internally displaced persons in support of host countries served as a crucial reminder of the importance of that role at a time when a worrying narrative was emerging that the Office should confine its focus to refugees or limit its support for the internally displaced to emergency protection and assistance, thereby excluding it from a role in finding solutions.

15. UNHCR, he observed, had devoted one fifth of its total expenditure to internally displaced persons even though they were twice as numerous as refugees. Its mandate in support of refugees was indeed more extensive and better defined, based on the 1951 Convention, and there were other international agencies involved in providing protection and durable solutions for the internally displaced, but UNHCR still had a central role to play in that field and needed more resources to fulfil it.

16. Regarding its major role in the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, under which it provided critical support to the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement and benefitted from the durable solutions fund co-financed by Switzerland for the 15 Action Agenda pilot countries, his delegation encouraged the Office to contribute to efforts to ensure that internal displacement be adequately addressed at the international level and embedded in the United Nations agenda, including at future editions of the Global Refugee Forum. It further encouraged the Office to continue its close cooperation with key partners, such as the IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); to seize the opportunities offered by regional and community-based approaches; to continue its efforts to mobilize support from financial institutions, development actors and the private sector; and to strengthen its integrated approach to forced displacement, so that the needs and potential of internally displaced persons were not considered separately from those of the refugees and host communities residing in the same territory.

17. The representative of **Nigeria**, expressing appreciation for the update on UNHCR efforts to address internal displacement issues under the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, said that the alarming figures cited by the Principal Advisor on Internal Displacement showed that governments were in urgent need of assistance in addressing the multilayered challenges in various displacement settings.

18. Her delegation noted with appreciation the references in the update to the Office's contribution to government-led reforms and legislative frameworks in several countries, including hers; the newly published UNHCR policy on emergency preparedness and response, which sought to complement government efforts in addressing internal displacement by making durable solutions a requirement from the outset; and the project in Adamawa state in Nigeria to assist the Government in its efforts to facilitate the integration of internally displaced persons with permanent housing and strengthening access to land rights. It also commended the launch of a protection risk assessment tool for internally displaced persons; the support to resident coordinators for the state-level and regional action plans; and the development of a five-year strategic plan for protection and solutions.

19. Nigeria, as one of the 15 pilot countries under the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, was benefitting from his commitment to implementing solutions strategies with measurable indicators. The Governor of Borno state had recently pledged to earmark 15 per cent of the state's budget in each of next five years for efforts to address the concerns of

internally displaced persons, and the governors of Adamawa and Yobe states had pledged to allocate 5 per cent of their respective budgets in each of the next three years. Those commitments would help to provide durable solutions for more than 2 million internally displaced persons and 2 million returnees in Nigeria.

20. Internally displaced persons, as highlighted in the report, represented the largest group of persons of concern to UNHCR in the world, and resources clearly needed to be allocated to ensuring concrete solutions to address the growing numbers. Her delegation therefore urged UNHCR, in its deliberations with other stakeholders, to advocate for an approach focusing on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to foster durable solutions for internally displaced persons. Nigeria greatly valued the Office's collaboration with stakeholders in addressing the plight of those persons and stood ready to support it in its work.

21. The representative of **Australia**, expressing her country's deep concerns about the record high number of persons displaced by conflict and violence in 2023, welcomed the Office's efforts to build partnerships that promoted a nexus approach, which was crucial to a solutions-focused response. As a signatory to the multi-stakeholder pledge on peacebuilding and conflict prevention led by Colombia, Egypt, Norway and the United Nations' Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, her delegation was pleased to see that the Peacebuilding Fund, to which Australia was a contributing donor, had been used to support internally displaced persons in Cameroon, South Sudan and the Sudan.

22. Her delegation strongly supported the Office's "durable solutions from the start" approach and programmatic interventions that enabled decision-making on the solutions by communities, hence invested in people and their own capabilities. It also commended UNHCR for its work to strengthen national statistical systems and encouraged it to act on the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) recommendation that it support data collection that captured both the needs and capabilities of displaced populations. Lastly, it requested an update on how UNHCR was planning to follow up on the priority recommendation of the IASC independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement that the participation of internally displaced persons be encouraged to "ensure [that] their voices define[d] priority-setting, programming and decision-making", and also recommended the provision of "more empowering aid, such as cash".

23. The representative of the **United States of America**, endorsing the emphasis in document EC/75/SC/CRP.15 on the centrality of protection and solutions for a meaningful response to internal displacement and the importance of advocacy, said that the independent evaluation by UNHCR of its engagement in internal displacement situations had confirmed that its comparative advantage lay in the area of protection services. The Office must continue to operationalize its strategic positioning by providing consistently high-quality, practical, technical expertise through its cluster leadership roles and its own service delivery, which called for hard choices and prioritization. In its monitoring of the implementation of the 2019 "step-up" initiative, her country had found the funding support to internally displaced persons and related activities to have been inconsistent and unpredictable; future efforts must be sustained and oriented towards more concrete outcomes.

24. On the Office's collaboration with the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which had been key to ensuring a coordinated "One UN" response, with widely varying degrees of success across the 15 pilot countries, her delegation requested more information on how its own institutional plan on such solutions aligned with the work of the Special Adviser, and how it was contributing to the process through its own protection lens. Her country, in keeping with its efforts to prioritize solutions, urged UNHCR to establish clear programmatic and thematic boundaries in its role regarding durable solutions for internally displaced persons and to continue to consolidate its solutions work around its protection expertise. It also urged UNHCR to issue further guidance to its regional bureaux and country offices on the underlying principles of the "durable solutions from the start" approach, including practical steps on how to link up with development partners and responsibly disengage at the appropriate time.

25. The representative of **Norway**, commending UNHCR for its advocacy on behalf of internally displaced persons through its leadership role in the Global Protection Cluster and its support to States, said that the Office's work was crucial to enabling the humanitarian system to respond to internal displacement in a timely, efficient and coordinated manner and to ensuring a voice for – and



the inclusion of – the internally displaced and their host communities through a “whole-of-society” approach.

26. His delegation appreciated the Office’s engagement within the framework of the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and its critical support to – and cooperation with – the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement in seeking durable solutions, including through its programmes in the 15 pilot countries. The “durable solutions from the start” approach, at a time when conflicts and other crises often led to protracted displacements, was key to moving beyond the response and assistance model, which called for a broader approach with measures addressing not only humanitarian action but also peacebuilding, human rights and long-term development. States and the United Nations system must find ways to refocus their respective approaches, with UNHCR continuing to strive to convene and align a broader group of stakeholders to support the work of regional coordinators at the country level and pave the way for transformative action. His country strongly supported the Office’s key partnerships with the IOM, UNDP and the World Bank, among others, and it remained committed to ensuring that the protection of – and durable solutions for – internally displaced persons were prioritized, as reiterated in his Government’s newly launched humanitarian strategy.

27. The representative of the **Sudan**, acknowledging the significant progress in the efforts of UNHCR to enhance its advocacy, operational coordination and strategic partnerships to address the challenges faced by internally displaced persons worldwide, welcomed the Office’s initiatives and focus on promoting durable solutions from the onset of displacement crises and the emphasis placed on the centrality of protection for the internally displaced.

28. Expressing appreciation for – and commending – the specific efforts undertaken in her country including to promote economic empowerment and invest in support for local communities and authorities in the White Nile State, her delegation requested further clarification regarding the dynamics of partnerships with other key stakeholders and, in particular, on the framework for the Office’s collaboration with the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement, specifically in the Sudan, where his work has been suspended owing to the current circumstances. Further, in view of the rapidly escalating displacement crisis in that country, her Government looked forward to receiving more support through the implementation of the multi-stakeholder pledges announced at the second Global Refugee Forum concerning the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. A coordinated approach involving multiple stakeholders – including governments, United Nations agencies, international organizations and civil society organizations – would be more effective in addressing the root causes and impacts of displacement. UNHCR must continue its vital work and enhance its engagement with all the relevant stakeholders to ensure a holistic, integrated, response to internal displacement.

29. The Sudan remains committed to finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons that promoted their welfare and reintegration into society. Action must be taken without delay, for the provision of mid- and long-term development aid to the internally displaced remained an urgent priority, even in the midst of conflict – extending support now can serve to mitigate the suffering, enhance resilience and pave the way for sustainable solutions.

30. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, commending UNHCR for its advocacy on behalf of internally displaced persons and its work to encourage a focus on development-led durable solutions from the onset of a crisis, said that internal displacement issues could not be left to the humanitarian community alone to manage and welcomed the Office’s efforts to strengthen its partnerships, particularly with development actors. While acknowledging that the primary responsibility for creating the conditions to enable solutions for internally displaced persons lay with States, his delegation highly valued the Office’s engagement with the Secretary-General’s Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. After the mandate of the Special Adviser on Internal Displacement ended later that year, UNHCR would have a crucial role to play in embedding in the United Nations system the concept-learning and good practices established by the Office of the Special Adviser. Protection must be central to the solutions for internally displaced persons and his delegation recognized the leadership that UNHCR had shown and continued to show on the issue. Noting also that there was a system-wide responsibility to reduce the risks to affected populations and improve the response to internal displacement, however, his delegation encouraged UNHCR to continue its engagement with internally displaced persons in close coordination with the IASC and other relevant actors.

31. The representative of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, thanking and commending UNHCR for striving to ensure the centrality of protection and solutions for internally displaced persons, took note of the independent evaluation to assess its engagement in situations of internal displacement and the recommendations to strengthen its strategic positioning.

32. His country, which was experiencing one of the most protracted, complex and neglected crises in the world, was having to cope with complex humanitarian challenges linked to internal displacement due not only to armed conflict but also to the impacts of climate change. With the number of internally displaced persons having passed the 7 million mark a few weeks earlier, 6.3 of the current 7.2 million displaced persons were fleeing violence and insecurity in the eastern provinces: 40 per cent of the population of Ituri province was currently displaced, followed by 30 per cent of that of North Kivu and 22 per cent of that of South Kivu. His Government appreciated to the full the efforts of UNHCR and its partners as they continued to deliver vital assistance to displaced populations in the harshest conditions, compelled to take difficult decisions to meet first and foremost the needs of the most vulnerable.

33. His Government, in a law passed to protect and assist internally displaced persons, had set out clearly the obligations of state and non-state actors in terms of prevention, emergency assistance and the search for durable solutions, but the situation of internally displaced persons remained complex and continuous assistance was required to meet their needs. In the light of the worrying humanitarian situation around the world, the international community must continue to support UNHCR in its efforts to assist displaced populations, not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but wherever the need might arise. A coordinated, global, collective approach was crucial to enabling all displaced persons to recover their dignity.

34. The representative of **Chile**, noting with appreciation the Office's contributions to the implementation of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, as set out in the document, highlighted in particular the importance of the recently published institutional plan on solutions to internal displacement, which outlined an operational strategy and concrete actions to prevent, respond to and pave the way for solutions to internal displacement, and the relevance of the triple nexus approach for embedding durable solutions in emergency preparedness and response activities from the onset of a crisis; those solutions would have to be produced in collaboration with the authorities and communities to ensure informed decision-making. Her delegation recognized the need to work differently, enhance efficiency and avoid duplication to ensure the effective use of financial resources and technical assistance.

35. Turning to the protection risk assessment tool for internally displaced persons, which the Office had developed to ensure that there were safeguards in place to mitigate protection risks while engaging in programming for solutions, she said that it was very useful indeed. It was currently being tested in a number of pilot countries but could be incorporated into national United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), which were the key instruments for the planning and implementation of country-level United Nations development activities in support of the implementation, in turn, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the core commitments of which – “leave no one behind” and improve lives and opportunities for all – were central to the Office's conception of durable solutions.

36. Her delegation welcomed the information provided in document EC/75/SC/CRP.15 on the work of the UNHCR-World Bank Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. to improve the collection, analysis and sharing of socioeconomic data on forced displacement, in line with international standards.

37. The representative of **Germany** said that UNHCR played a vital role in providing protection to internally displaced persons and its commitment and tireless efforts to fulfil that role in often complex and hard-to-reach settings was much appreciated. The increased visibility in regard to the needs of internally displaced populations and the enhanced collaboration and coordination within the humanitarian system to address them were welcome developments, achieved thanks also to the work of the Special Adviser on Internal Displacement. Collective efforts must be centred on the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement and the focus be kept on solutions strategies. Protracted displacement must be addressed to sustain the pathways to solutions and partnerships be strengthened and expanded to include not just the usual stakeholders, but also other regional and multilateral actors from the fields of development and peacebuilding, among others.

More countries must have longer-term, solutions-oriented, national plans; and providing access to protection, housing, education and livelihoods will build the resilience of communities against future risks and challenges.

38. His delegation commended the strengthening of the Office's relationship with UNDP and hoped to see even more coordinated and efficient United Nations system processes to provide protection and solutions for internally displaced persons. It recognized how the work of the Steering Group on Solutions to Internal Displacement had improved coordination and the visibility of internally displaced persons within the respective agencies. UNHCR and other agencies in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus should create the necessary coordination structures and ensure that they were fit for purpose. More must be done to mainstream protection, responses and solutions into United Nations system-wide efforts, ensuring that internally displaced persons and their needs were recognized and the responses were fully integrated into the various initiatives. His delegation supported the crucial reforms at the IASC and at the level of individual agencies and would remain closely engaged on those issues.

39. The representative of **Morocco** supported the Office's comprehensive approach to seeking durable solutions to international displacement and commended progress made in promoting legislative reforms and strengthening national policies to protect internally displaced persons. The emphasis on durable solutions from the start resonated deeply with the Government of Morocco's strategic approach to humanitarian crises. It was committed to promoting long-term solutions to emergency preparedness and response activities, ensuring that displaced individuals could rebuild their lives with dignity and security, including through programmes focusing on economic empowerment, social cohesion and community-based approaches. He appreciated efforts to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and stated that sustainable solutions required a holistic approach that integrated data analysis, statistics, humanitarian aid, development initiatives and peacebuilding efforts. He encouraged collaboration between UNHCR and key partners, including UNDP, IOM and UN-Women.

40. The representative of the **Republic of Korea**, highlighting the importance of inter-agency coordination on international displacement and the role of the United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, said UNHCR should look beyond coordination and incorporate a comprehensive United Nations system-wide and interconnected approach. Programmes of the specialized agencies of the United Nations system should be closely aligned based on a common strategy and implementing plans for internally displaced persons, with more meaningful joint activities. As there was no dedicated single agency for internally displaced persons, the relationship between UNHCR and IOM was crucial, and they should be encouraged to act like one agency and to present more joint documents. The budget and funding dimension was a possible area for future progress under a joint approach. Data indicated that the return rate of internally displaced persons was twice or three times greater than that of refugees and that protection and assistance costs for internally displaced persons were much less than for refugees. Moreover, solution possibilities appeared to be more favourable to internally displaced persons. More safe havens for refugees in countries of origin should be sought and should be a key direction within the framework of the humanitarian-development nexus to address refugee and internal displacement issues. However, the humanitarian-development nexus should not be used as a way of expanding the funding base but rather aim to build the solution base for refugees and internally displaced persons.

41. The representative of **Ethiopia**, fully supporting the comprehensive approach to internally displaced persons, outlined some measures taken by his Government, including putting in place legal and policy frameworks to address internal displacement issues and seek durable solutions. It had thus far returned over 2.5 million internally displaced persons without partner support but called on assistance for returnees from partners until they were better integrated. The multifaceted difficulties faced by internally displaced persons required a comprehensive approach at all levels and, as a member of the Group of Friends on Solutions to Internal Displacement, he expressed appreciation for the work and positive results of the Office of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement in that regard. He stressed that internal displacement was more of a developmental than a humanitarian issue. Welcoming the Office's support in providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons in Ethiopia, he called for enhanced UNHCR assistance to internally displaced persons. He asked what role UNHCR would have after the Special Adviser's mandate expired at the end of 2024. His understanding was that the Special Adviser had been commissioned



to create a mechanism for leading on internal displacement matters without creating a new office.

42. The representative of **Canada** said that his Government was proud to co-chair the Group of Friends on Solutions to Internal Displacement with Colombia and commended the work of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Placement. His Government continued to advocate for a coordinated inter-agency approach to protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, and was encouraged by the reaffirmation of the IOM/UNHCR Framework of Engagement. It eagerly awaited further details on steps towards its implementation. Referring to the recommendations of the evaluation of UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement, he encouraged the Office to streamline the division of labour and strengthen coordination with IOM, particularly in disaster settings where both agencies co-led the Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster. There should be greater synergies in data collection and analysis between the two agencies to avoid duplication and maintain operational efficiencies. He welcomed the signing of a new data-sharing framework agreement between UNHCR and the World Bank. It strongly supported the direct consultation of displaced persons and the integration of protection and durable solutions into humanitarian strategies, human rights frameworks, development plans and peacebuilding efforts. He welcomed the recommendations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's independent review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement. He asked how those recommendations would be implemented, including how the response to internal displacement would be integrated into the roles of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and country-level Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators.

43. The representative of **Ukraine**, thanking UNHCR for its life-saving assistance to internally displaced Ukrainians, said that more than 4 million Ukrainians were currently internally displaced and, while 4.5 million had returned to their homes, sustainable reintegration remained a distant prospect. The humanitarian outlook had deteriorated with the systematic and blatant violation of international humanitarian law. He looked forward to the High Commissioner's visit to Ukraine to witness first-hand the impacts of the war and discuss priority areas of UNHCR support. He called on UNHCR to further promote its humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach in Ukraine, supporting recovery resilience and facilitating durable solutions, while focusing on the most vulnerable groups of internally displaced persons and frontline communities. UNHCR support to Ukraine's winterization efforts and national strategy and action plan for internal displacement to 2025 was particularly important. Further localization of the UNHCR response through expanded support to community-based organizations and initiatives and a whole-of-society approach were needed. More than 500 councils had been created in Ukraine to enhance the participation of internally displaced persons in public affairs and decision-making, strengthen social cohesion, integrate their views into local policy development, and help them find a durable solution to their displacement. He called on UNHCR, as head of the Protection Cluster, to continue supporting the work of internally displaced persons councils in Ukraine.

44. The representative of **Colombia** said that her country had the fourth highest number of internally displaced persons, primarily due to the armed conflict, and the second highest number of persons in the region displaced by the climate crisis, mainly affecting coastal and island areas. The La Guajira region, home to the Wayúu indigenous communities, had been significantly impacted by climate change, generating high rates of displacement. It was a key moment to discuss how the international community could support disaster victims, given that evidence already pointed to disasters as a factor in driving people to move. The Colombian Constitutional Court had recently recognized forced displacement due to environmental causes and had tasked Congress with drafting laws to protect victims of weather events such as floods, droughts or landslides. It was a landmark decision, as it was persons displaced by the armed conflict who had historically been recognized as victims of forced displacement. The Government was developing a national strategy and would work closely with UNHCR and local and international organizations to promote community empowerment and seek durable solutions for people forced to flee. The Group of Friends on Solutions to Internal Displacement, which Colombia led with Canada, had noted that coordination between state institutions and international cooperation were key to achieving and developing the strategy. Donor countries, international financial institutions, the private sector, academia and civil society should be involved in developing actions under the strategy.

45. The representative of **Uganda** said that her Government remained committed to fulfilling its responsibilities and obligations under the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and sought the

cooperation of its partners, led by UNHCR, to support its national systems. Response to internally displaced persons was a core state mandate and she sought clarification on the UNHCR mandate vis-à-vis internally displaced persons and, more importantly, with respect to solutions. She asked whether the UNHCR role in the inter-agency approach would allow it to take on a mandate, or whether that had to be conferred by an institution or body. The primary cause of recent internal displacement in Uganda was the impact of climate change. In refugee settlements, deforestation was occurring due to refugees cutting down the little green cover there was for shelter and fuel, thereby adding to the impact of climate change and running the risk of secondary displacement. She asked the Office what its intervention plans were in that regard. The mandate of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement coming to an end was a cause for concern, and she asked what next steps the UNHCR envisaged and whether it intended to engage the United Nations Secretary-General. Information and best practices on early warning mechanisms on climate change, including examples of international community support to national response mechanisms, would be appreciated.

46. The **Principal Adviser on Internal Displacement** (UNHCR) said that it was clear from the statements made that many member States were working actively on solutions to international displacement. Partnerships had also been mentioned; UNHCR was committed to partnerships and to providing support to the Regional Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator countries. With regard to what would happen after the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General concluded his mandate, UNHCR would definitely be one of the United Nations agencies that would continue to carry the response forward and deliver on it. On protection, UNHCR had an added value in the inter-agency approach when it came to assisting with human rights and the protection of and engagement with internally displaced persons. Regarding the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, peace was one of the most important things for any action when it came to solutions and the nexus should be further explored. On solutions, it was clear that there was a need to inform operations on what solutions from the start meant. He agreed on the need for good quality data, which must underpin what was being done not only to assist but to seek solutions for internally displaced persons. He agreed that funding was crucial. In response to the questions raised by Uganda, UNHCR derived its interventions relating to internally displaced persons from the recommendations made by the General Assembly, Executive Committee and United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the support to internally displaced persons was linked to UNHCR support to refugees. On the complexity of international displacement and the risk of secondary displacement, a response would require more time than available but he would be happy to discuss the issue with the representative of Uganda after the session.

**(b) Oral update on mental health and psychosocial support**

47. The **Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions** (UNHCR) said that the Executive Committee had adopted a landmark conclusion in 2022 on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), marking a pivotal moment in the UNHCR approach to addressing the mental health and psychosocial well-being of displaced populations. Given the increasing conflicts and growing scale and complexity of forced displacement worldwide, the heightened focus was timely and critical, as demonstrated in the recent crisis in the Sudan. During a recent joint mission to Ethiopia in May 2024, newly arrived Sudanese refugees had spoken about their harrowing experiences of the conflict and their dangerous journeys to safety. They had reported children's difficulties in attending or concentrating in schools, and adults' severely impaired ability to work. There were similar reports from other countries to where Sudanese refugees were fleeing, such as Chad, Egypt and South Sudan. The examples highlighted the critical mental health and psychosocial needs in refugee situations. One in five people in crisis-affected settings had clinically relevant mental health needs.

48. To address the issue, UNHCR and partners were integrating MHPSS into sectoral strategies in public health, protection and education and into UNHCR guidance for emergencies and protracted refugee settings, focusing on evidence-based approaches to MHPSS, prioritizing providing basic clinical mental health care, offering psychosocial interventions and involving communities in efforts. For instance, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh were being trained as psychosocial volunteers and counsellors. Syrian refugee outreach volunteers in Lebanon provided psychosocial support and counselling to other refugees. UNHCR had developed a manual that had been adopted by the Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon as a standard tool. In Peru, in partnership with universities and non-governmental organizations, UNHCR trained displaced Venezuelan psychologists to provide psychotherapy for depression. UNHCR collaborated closely with partners,

including specialized agencies in the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and governments in hosting countries to integrate MHPSS into their response. An important example of strong inter-agency cooperation was the MHPSS Minimum Service Package, an UNHCR collaboration with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNFPA. In 2023, it had introduced the package in Pakistan and Ethiopia and planned to implement it in South Sudan in 2024. With limited resources, the package's focus on integrating MHPSS within sectors was crucial. From the start of a response, UNHCR would work with host country governments to use the package to strengthen national sectoral policies.

49. UNHCR's five-year focus area strategic plan for protection and solutions for internally displaced persons also described a targeted role for MHPSS activities, particularly in contexts where national governments and other partners' capacity was limited to deliver services. Examples were Afghanistan, where MHPSS was a good entry point for engagement with women and girls, and Ukraine, where the Government had prioritized MHPSS but needed support. UNHCR was also moving forward with the localization of the response. In many refugee-hosting countries, its MHPSS partners were national or local organizations, while a decade ago, those were typically international partners. Shifting to national non-governmental organizations had advantages for sustainability. In terms of UNHCR capacity, many MHPSS posts had been nationalized in the past two years after an international staff member had mentored the national staff to take over. All those efforts were paying off: in 2023, 1.3 million displaced persons received MHPSS services, up from 1.1 million in 2022. At the Global Refugee Forum, 113 new pledges had been submitted to support the multi-stakeholder commitment. Through the Global Refugee Forum Group of Friends for Health and MHPSS, UNHCR would continue to work with member States and other stakeholders to implement those pledges. It was also encouraging that the World Health Assembly had recently passed a resolution on strengthening MHPSS, which the Office would follow up. MHPSS needed sustained attention at a time when limited funding required the Organization to make tough choices. UNHCR would continue to anchor mental health and psychosocial programming into its interventions in public health, protection, education and other sectors. It counted on member States' support.

50. The representative of **Switzerland** said that ensuring adequate mental health and psychosocial care was essential for those affected. However, the lack of financial and human resources, physical or virtual access to, and availability of such services posed constraints. His Government encouraged self-care in the affected communities, integrating psychosocial approaches for the people most affected into relevant programmes. For children, that meant including psychosocial approaches in educational activities and, for women, including the approaches in support programmes for victims of gender-based violence and in socioeconomic empowerment initiatives. The aim was to encourage the establishment of self-help groups, providing access to a first level of support that was invaluable, inexpensive and more sustainable. Those approaches should also be extended to host communities, including ensuring that they had a better understanding of the traumatic impact of displacement to enable them to better manage the situation and facilitate the resilience and psychosocial recovery of those affected.

51. The representative of **the Sudan** strongly supported the prioritization of mental health and psychosocial support by UNHCR in addressing the critical needs of displaced populations. The Sudanese people were experiencing extraordinarily difficult times and facing severe mental health and psychosocial challenges, with individuals, families and communities enduring terrible conditions of human rights violations, looting, rape committed by the Rapid Support Forces, and the loss of relatives on the move. A multisectoral approach and the integration of MHPSS into health, protection and education programming were essential. The funding shortfall remained a significant barrier, and she urged donors and international partners to continue and increase their support to ensure that UNHCR and its partners could meet the urgent needs. Sustained attention and resources were vital for the mental health and psychosocial well-being of displaced populations, ensuring that they received the care and support they so desperately needed. Her Government looked forward to the implementation of the multi-stakeholder pledges on MHPSS announced during the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

52. The representative of **Zambia** described measures taken by her Government to address mental health and psychosocial challenges in her country, including adopting a holistic approach to providing psychosocial counselling services for persons and communities forcibly displaced, integrated through government ministries and institutions. Psychosocial services for refugees had been significantly improved and ensured equal access to services as Zambian nationals. The best

interests of children were prioritized, safeguarding their emotional and physical well-being, regardless of age and nationality, and psychosocial counselling and support was provided, especially to separated and unaccompanied minors. Survivors of abuse and gender-based violence received shelter, food, counselling and provision to meet their basic needs. Challenges remained, including a shortage of psychosocial counselling offices, mental health offices and inadequate child-friendly spaces, which affected the quality and outcome of counselling sessions. To address the challenges, partnerships with non-governmental organizations had been forged and strengthened. For example, the Government was implementing a project in the Mantapala refugee settlement and the host community, in partnership with the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiatives (REPSSI), and it was hoped to extend the initiative to other refugee settlements.

53. The representative of the **Kingdom of the Netherlands** welcomed the fact that efforts made with regards to mental health and psychosocial support were on the agenda, given that the 2022 Executive Committee Conclusions No. 116 and the outcomes of the Global Refugee Forum highlighted it as a vital element in work with displaced and host communities. Noting the call on donors to support such initiatives, she stressed that mental health and psychosocial support was a core element enabling UNHCR to deliver on its mandate, and as such must not be treated as an add-on, but must be integral to its work, including policies, core budgets and human resources. In view of this, she recognized the Office's considerable achievements in integrating mental health and psychosocial support into its work.

54. She said it was important to ensure that previous investments were built upon, despite budgetary scarcity, and that the Kingdom of the Netherlands was continuing to work on its commitments under the multi-stakeholder pledge at the Global Refugee Forum. The adoption at the World Health Assembly of the resolution on strengthening mental health and psychosocial support before, during and after crises anchors it in the global health sector and gives additional entry points for cooperation with donor and host Governments on the provision of accessible, quality mental health and psychosocial support to displaced and host communities.

55. The representative of the **United States of America** agreed that the Executive Committee Conclusion successfully galvanized attention to mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian contexts, and applauded the work of the Office's Public Health Section to update guidance and policies and support operations to implement them. She said that the United States of America was pleased to engage with UNHCR over the previous year, and that it, too, continued to enhance its support for mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian contexts.

56. Emphasizing the importance of refugee access to specialized mental health and psychosocial support, she said that her country was grounding its programming in best practices that integrated localized knowledge with evidence-based information, expanding its collaborative partnerships, and drawing attention to mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings.

57. The **Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions** (UNHCR) said that the Office and Member States had done a lot of work since the Executive Committee resolution, and that the advice and suggestions from Member States had been very valuable. Emphasizing the integral nature of mental health and psychosocial support to the Office's work in several areas, and noting improvements made, he acknowledged that the challenges were enormous in emergency and protracted situations, and that more support and efforts needed to be made. He reassured Member States that the Office's capacity in terms of integrating into systems was well underway and that progress continued to be made.

## 5. Programme/protection policy

### **UNHCR coordination efforts to measure the impact arising from hosting, protecting and assisting refugees (EC/75/SC/CRP.16)**

58. The **Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions** (UNHCR) presenting Conference Room Paper No. 16, spoke of the work carried out between the Office and Member States over previous years to measure the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees as outlined in the December 2017 Omnibus Resolution. The Office had convened six workshops and meetings between Member States, the World Bank and the Joint Data Center for Forced Displacement. He recalled key points raised at the 2023 July Standing Committee meeting, including to expand the

number of sectors covered and the emphasis on accelerating the work to be able to discuss gaps in international cooperation and promoting burden-and responsibility-sharing. It had also been stressed that quantifying the costs is only the first step, and that financing and broader multi-stakeholder engagement was necessary. There was a need to develop national costings, engage host countries in developing the methodology, and more regional workshops were desired. These points had framed the basis of the Office's work over the previous twelve months.

59. Meetings and workshops were held with the African Group, the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation, and others, followed by a fifth workshop with Member States, supported by the World Bank and the World Bank-UNHCR Joint Data Center for Forced Displacement, during which, Member States agreed to expand the focus from education to include health and basic needs, based on data from major refugee-hosting countries. At the sixth workshop in Nairobi, findings from the global costing analysis for health and basic needs were presented.

60. The costing exercise had allowed the Office to make some of its biggest strides and start building financing solutions. A highlight was the "Global Cost of Inclusive Refugee Education" report, led by the World Bank, which estimated the annual cost of providing education to all refugee students in low- and middle-income host countries at \$9.3 billion, and \$309 million in low-income countries. This showed that closing the gap was feasible. In line with the refugee inclusion pledge from the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, efforts had been made to develop a technical assistance mechanism called Investing in Social Protection for Inclusion, Resilience, and Efficiency (INSPIRE), supported by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and partners, including the World Bank, to develop and implement a multi-year, predictable financing approach.

61. Regarding health, the estimated global cost of providing health services to refugees through national systems was \$11 billion per year, \$239 million in low-income countries, which showed the impact that could be achieved with limited resources. A positive example of supporting health inclusion was Kenya, where refugees had been included in the national health insurance scheme, and health facilities in refugee settlements had been accredited. This was supported by strengthening the health system, including contributions from the private sector such as the World Diabetes Foundation, meaning host communities also saw improved access to and quality of care. He noted that the costing exercise on health would support the Global Refugee Forum multi-stakeholder pledge on Health Inclusion and System Strengthening.

62. For basic or subsistence needs, the draft report developed by the World Bank on "Economic Participation and the Global Cost of International Assistance in Support of Refugee Subsistence Needs" showed that when refugees are self-reliant, they rely less on humanitarian aid and contribute to the economy in host communities, as well as helping to close the poverty gap between refugees and host communities. On the other hand, refugees residing in camps earn less and are more dependent on aid. The example of the Local Integration Programme in Mexico showed how freedom, movement and economic participation is beneficial for all and helped refugees contribute to tax revenues and the country's economy.

63. With a view to linking costed plans to sustainable financing, the Office had built on the methodology to contextualize and provide a framework for the global costing exercises and account for nuances at the country level. He said that country-level analysis would support government-led processes to ensure findings are relevant to national policies and allow for more accurate insights.

64. He said UNHCR would clarify terminology around inclusion, integration and solutions. Appreciating the active participation of Member States and partners, he called for continued robust engagement, and said UNHCR and the World Bank stood ready to support those efforts.

65. The representative of **Kenya**, speaking on behalf of the African Group, expressed pleasure at hosting the sixth technical workshop and thanked UNHCR for its update on efforts being made towards measuring the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees, and the World Bank for its technical support. She said the record high numbers of refugees imposed the need for burden-and responsibility-sharing. Whilst it had been seen in some contexts, it needed to be global for all refugees everywhere, with all crises receiving adequate support. Given that the majority of refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries, the majority low- and medium-income countries, she recalled the words of the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the second Global Refugee Forum, that protection and help for refugees should not fall disproportionately on a few countries, and should be



matched with greater international solidarity, as well as creating conditions for peace so refugees can return home. The cost of hosting refugees extended beyond the fiscal to the environmental, security and social dimensions.

66. Welcoming the affirmation that it was essential to find ways to broaden the support base to promote equitable, predictable and sustainable responsibility sharing, she thanked the donors who continued to finance efforts to host, assist and protect refugees, and urged them to continue and scale up their endeavour, and called for more donors. She thanked the countries who continued to host refugees, sometimes for protracted periods. Quoting Paul Druker, she underlined the importance of measurement and assessment towards achieving a target, and ensuring that words are matched with action. She requested an update from UNHCR on the dissemination of the report on measuring the cost of inclusion of refugees in national education systems, and an assessment of the extent to which it had affected and informed financing of education for burden- and responsibility-sharing in the education sector. Noting the future steps of advancing the costing exercise to the country level, she looked forward to the roll-out of the exercise and said it was crucial to ensure that methodologies and roadmaps were consensus-based and lent themselves to protracted situations in various country contexts.

67. It was important to pay attention to recurrent costs as well as investment costs associated with hosting, assisting and protecting refugees, and the many variables of refugee situations. She welcomed the affirmation by the update that early action towards more equitable burden and responsibility sharing should not wait for a full assessment of impact and gaps, as refugees' needs would not wait.

68. The representative of the **Kingdom of the Netherlands** thanked UNHCR for the update and welcomed the costing exercises as essential to promoting effective approaches to refugee hosting and equitable burden and responsibility sharing. He said that country costing allowed the discussion to shift from principles to numbers and would allow for policy discussions emphasizing a mutually beneficial bargain between humanitarian and development partners, donors and host countries in which savings on aid were realized, along with additional investments in host country development. He expressed support for the World Bank in the costing exercises, through the PROSPECTS partnership with UNHCR, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, as well as UNICEF and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

69. The representative of **Switzerland** commended progress made on measuring the impact of hosting, protecting and assisting refugees. He said the report rightly aligned with the discussion on better burden- and responsibility-sharing, and that having developed an approach to measure the costs not just of education, but of health and basic needs, was a significant step. It was also important in terms of investment in the necessary infrastructure for hosting, and services for displaced persons.

70. He expressed hope that the benefits and opportunities of successful socioeconomic inclusion of displaced people would also be considered, as well as the costs. The way in which that potential could be seized depended on financial and technical support from the international community, especially development actors, financial institutions and the private sector. The legislative framework was key, such as in terms of access of displaced people to national systems, freedom of residence, work, recognition of professional and academic qualifications, access to bank accounts, credit and land titles. And that depended on the complementarity between the human capital of displaced people and the host community. For example, an International Monetary Fund study from 2022 showed that the medium-term growth produced by Venezuelans was ten times higher than the costs of integrating them in the short term. He asked whether UNHCR agreed with the approach of highlighting the positive impact of displaced people, especially with a view to optimization of financial resource allocation, as such an approach was important for private sector engagement. He called upon UNHCR to work on those points with the World Bank and other relevant actors.

71. The representative of **Nigeria** aligned with the statement delivered by Kenya on behalf of the African Group. Commending UNHCR for measuring the impact of hosting refugees, she reiterated that seventy per cent of refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries and echoed the need to broaden the support base to promote equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. She said Nigeria had continually opened its borders to refugees from countries across West Africa.

72. She recalled Nigeria's statement from the 87<sup>th</sup> Session of the Standing Committee, that the

exercise presented multiple complexities due to considering various country specificities. Nigeria believed that a participatory process taking into account a wide range of refugee-hosting Member States was crucial to developing a balanced methodology to measure the impact of hosting refugees in various countries, and it was necessary to harmonize that process with national and regional frameworks.

73. She enquired when the draft methodologies would be presented to Member States, without exception, and said that UNHCR was a valued partner.

74. The representative of **Ethiopia** aligned with the statement by Kenya on behalf of the African Group. Referring to the Chairperson's remark the previous day that she hoped all hopes of refugees would be fulfilled, he said that in his country, not even their basic needs are fulfilled. He said refugees were not burdens by themselves, but that opportunities must be created for them to enhance their self-reliance. He mentioned the impacts of hosting refugees, particularly in protracted situations.

75. Expressing support for the costing exercise, he said Ethiopia had been part of the group in Kenya, but that it should be cautious, taking into account differentiated levels of development, economic growth and the local and regional context of host countries. The exercise should be inclusive, focus on easing pressure and finding sustainable solutions, and lead to more equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. He recognized the Office's efforts in conducting the exercise, and appreciated the areas identified and consultations conducted, but called for the inclusion of more areas, such as housing and jobs. He said responses should address the challenges on the ground comprehensively, not in a selective manner. He said Ethiopia was happy to continue the costing exercise, and requested more information on how it would be sustainably financed. The generosity of host countries should not be taken for granted, the unfairness of the last decade should not continue, and that the solution was international cooperation.

76. The representative of **Algeria** thanked Kenya for the African Group statement, as well as the Secretariat of UNHCR and the Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions for the update, and the World Bank for its technical support in designing an effective methodology for quantifying host countries' efforts to assist refugees. He called for the combined efforts of all States to ease the burden on host countries, most of which were low or medium income. He said education and healthcare were free and compulsory for everyone legally present in Algeria, including refugees, such as the Sahrawi refugees that Algeria has been hosting for nearly 50 years, who receive free primary education and hundreds of whom receive student bursaries. That provision had a cost, especially in protracted situations, and Algeria deemed it essential to support all countries in a similar situation in examining means of measuring the impact on those sectors of hosting refugees. Algeria remained ready to collaborate with UNHCR.

77. The representative of **Uganda** aligned with the African Group statement. She thanked the Director of the Division of Resilience and Solutions for his leadership and for listening to host countries during the workshops. She said there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to measuring impact, and that Uganda was happy to participate in the sixth workshop in Nairobi.

78. Reflecting on the reasons for measuring the impact of hosting and protecting refugees, she said numbers and data, more than words, tell a clear story. Uganda had been hosting refugees for a long time in protracted situations, and when it said it was struggling, the words seemed like a complaint. However, she wondered whether Uganda would qualify as a donor if the figures were shown as to the amount Uganda contributed. Donor countries and host countries were referred to using different words, even though they were often doing the same, and sometimes the host was actually doing more. As a result, measuring impact through an authentic, transparent method was important, and she implored Member States to support it, whilst wondering how it would be financed.

79. The representative of the **United States of America** appreciated the efforts of UNHCR, the World Bank and the Joint Data Center to establish costing methodologies. She said the multi-sectoral approach to quantifying needs and impacts was only the first step, and that linking the gaps identified with policy changes and financing was the crucial next step. Broadening multi-stakeholder engagement to intensify responsibility sharing was a priority for the United States of America, in the context of the Global Compact on Refugees.

80. The United States of America made twenty-six additional pledges at the second Global Refugee Forum to increase support for refugee hosting countries, support self-reliance and inclusive education, and expand access to solutions for refugees and stateless individuals. Data was critical to advancing these priorities and ensuring evidence-based interventions.

81. The United States of America had supported the Joint Data Center since its start, and she commended it for leading efforts to generate stronger data on forcibly displaced persons. She said it was necessary to make data and data-driven insights more accessible to policymakers and practitioners, and further engage affected populations and local actors in the processes and responses.

82. Refugees brought huge economic and social benefits to host communities, and she hoped costing exercises would also account for those benefits, as well as how they can be maximised through effective policies. She said efforts to analyse the cost of not including refugees, other forcibly displaced persons, and stateless persons in national systems should also be explored.

83. The representative of **Mexico** expressed thanks for the update on the costing exercise. Considering that assisting refugees was a shared responsibility requiring international cooperation, she said it was very useful to have tools to measure the cost of providing assistance and protection, but also the impact and benefits of certain measures.

84. Mexico was implementing a cash assistance programme to cover the basic subsistence needs of people in the process of having their refugee status determined. The Programme for the Wellbeing of People in Natural or Social Emergencies began in 2019, and had so far helped over 120 million people. Likewise, the programme for local integration of refugees had allowed over 36 000 people to access formal employment. The inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers had proved to be effective.

85. Tools for measuring and evaluation could help inform decision making, not just in international cooperation and equitable responsibility sharing, but also to identify technical assistance needs at a national level, and ways of improving internal processes. The workshops were useful for sharing best practices and identifying common challenges of host countries. While there was no one-size-fits-all solution, a general framework could serve as a basis for advancing with measurement mechanisms. Mexico continued to assess the documents resulting from the workshops and looked forward to the final versions to explore the possibility of collaborating with UNHCR and the World Bank on a national analysis. She wondered whether conferences were planned with donors, at which countries could present their national costing plans.

86. The representative of **Belarus** welcomed the Office's work to support refugees. He said some sanctions were being instrumentalized by States. Some refugees from the Middle East travelled through Belarus to reach the European Union, which was concerning. Expressing concern about the adoption of the European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum, he said that there were many refugee influxes on the borders of the European Union. Repatriation of those refused as refugees depended on agreements with host countries, and only 20 per cent of those who should be returned were really returned. His country's Western neighbours were refusing to interact regarding countering illegal migration and protecting borders for political reasons, and he said this would lead to victims. Belarus had recently documented over 50 refugee deaths due to cruel treatment by Polish guards, and the body of a refugee was found near the Latvian border. Blaming Belarus's Western neighbours, as they had built fences on their borders, which exacerbated the problem, instead of using a constructive approach, he called on UNHCR to react to the issue.

87. The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** called for collective efforts to find ways to improve the resilience of host communities, as well as durable solutions to guarantee burden-sharing across all States. He also urged UNHCR to look into a more realistic budgetary approach which considered emergencies and fiscal constraints and to review its budgetary guidelines for national and country offices.

88. While stressing the importance of factoring the resilience of host communities into any calculation, his country encouraged UNHCR to take into account the types of challenges faced by countries like the Islamic Republic of Iran, which had been hit with financial restrictions and coercive measures, and to provide clearer definitions of different refugee types for more accurate

statistics and assessments of individual needs. In addition, his delegation took the view that the current calculation methodology did not accurately reflect the cost burden of covering the basic health and educational needs of refugees for host countries. Therefore, he encouraged the Office to look into a more nuanced approach.

89. The representative of **Morocco** praised the collective efforts of UNHCR, the World Bank and the Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement on developing new ways to measure the fiscal costs of integrating refugees into national systems. That crucial collaborative work would result in better informed policymaking and more effective resource allocation. He supported ongoing efforts to create transparent and adaptable methodologies which could be applied to different circumstances and urged the Office to include sectors such as health and social protection in future assessments.

90. As the leading party on the mega-pledge on health inclusion, mental health and psychosocial support, his country intended to work tirelessly to advance the objectives in those areas. During the Third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants, held in Morocco, the Rabat Declaration was adopted, which aimed to contribute to developing inclusive legislation through providing tools and disaggregated data sets in order to improve processes for measuring refugee needs and cost burdens, including for national health systems. His country looked forward to engaging with United Nations Charter Member States on the inclusion workstream at the policy level.

91. The representative of **Zimbabwe** noted the consultative processes around the global hosting methodology and asked whether it had been adopted during the sixth of the series of workshops in Nairobi, given the small attendance at the workshop and some of the other comments raised by other delegations during the Standing Committee meeting.

92. The representative of the **Republic of Korea** echoed the concerns raised by a number of delegations about needing a balanced global and country-specific approach to measuring the impact of hosting refugees. With this in mind, he stressed the need to have structured localized representation for explaining country-specific cost analyses at a global level. Therefore, he asked when UNHCR would issue an initial version of the framework document with a couple of countries included as examples.

93. The **Director for the Division of Resilience and Solutions** (UNHCR) thanked delegates for their contributions and support for the Office's activities. He gratefully appreciated the analysis and data provided by refugee-hosting States on health, education and basic needs, which was vital to any progress on measuring the impact of hosting, processing and assisting refugees. Using those data and analyses, UNHCR had been working with the World Bank and Joint Data Center on Global Displacement to develop global methodologies and frameworks. However, it had also invited Member States to participate in the process, through involvement in workshops and side discussions, both in person and online, and through a survey. Although only six States participated in the survey, they provided valuable input towards establishing a global costing framework.

94. Acknowledging the importance of adopting a nuanced approach to the costing framework based on specific country circumstances, he stressed that the global framework could now be taken forward to a country level. In response to the African Group's contribution, he agreed that Member States should receive support and stressed that country-level analysis was being undertaken. In addition, further work would be performed to cover the hosting costs beyond the three core areas of health, education and basic needs, such as housing, jobs and the environment. Those additional areas were also context-specific and would also be addressed in country-level discussions.

95. In response to Zimbabwe's question on whether a global hosting methodology had been adapted at the sixth workshop in Nairobi, he explained that the parties in attendance reached an agreement on the global methodology, but a number of country-specific issues remained, as did calls for more nuanced approaches for measuring national hosting impacts. Therefore, he called for more participation from other refugee-hosting countries in the costing exercises.

96. He thanked Morocco for holding the Third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants in Rabat, noting the useful discussions on the impact of hosting refugees on the health sector. Responding to the point by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the need to clarify the definitions of refugee types, he confirmed that UNHCR would provide the refined terminology, as requested at

the sixth workshop in Nairobi, to help States with their individual cost estimations.

97. He commended Mexico's work to provide jobs and employment opportunities for refugees and noted that it was a successful example for others to follow. He also expressed gratitude to the United States of America for its support for the Joint Data Center for Forced Displacement, which had helped to identify financing and policy gaps. He emphasized that the data shared by the World Bank at the sixth workshop in Nairobi showed that increasing refugee self-reliance when integrating them, as opposed to an encampment approach, resulted in reduced humanitarian-aid costs. However, increasing refugee self-reliance would require increased developmental funding, meaning that recurrent costs and other factors should be considered in relation to inclusion.

98. He emphasized that future steps would include follow-up discussions on financial support pledges and more engagement with the private sector. A number of successful collaborative efforts were identified, including INSPIRE for implementing the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum 2023, and IFC UNHCR joint initiative. The Office's joint work with the World Bank on costing exercises would continue and their global partnership would strengthen in a number of areas, with more information about sustainable programming and about how UNHCR would be taking the workstream forward with the World Bank, private sector and other partners being provided following the Standing Committee meeting.

99. Answering Nigeria's question on disseminating the work already carried out, he explained that the Office would organize a briefing of the Member States to share any achievements in efforts to measure cost burdens at a technical level and encouraged all Member States to participate. Furthermore, he once again urged Member States to share country-level data with the Office in order to further its work at a country-specific level. In response to the Republic of Korea's question, he explained that the global costing framework covering the areas of health, education and basic needs was complete and it would now need to be developed at a country level. In order to support the technical work involved, UNHCR would need more data and analyses from host countries on the cost burdens in order to guarantee more equitable responsibility- and burden-sharing in financing the gaps that the Office had started to identify.

100. The representative of **Bangladesh** stressed that the cost measurement exercise was vital to easing the financial burden on refugee-hosting countries and to guaranteeing equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing in that area. Her country welcomed the World Bank's offer to conduct country-by-country analysis following requests to do so at the workshops organized by UNHCR. However, her delegation was reluctant to recognize the global methodology for education, as it felt that education for refugees should be delivered in their own language and should adhere to the curriculum of their country of origin. Furthermore, she expressed alarm about using refugee inclusion and integration in host countries for measuring the shortfall in financial support for supporting the financial burden on incorporating refugees into the national education, health and social security systems.

101. Acknowledging that increased economic integration of refugees and eased encampment policies would be a major undertaking, she stated that Rohingya refugees could not be welcomed into Bangladesh's national system. The stance was taken due to concerns that it could reduce the minimum wage in host communities, could worsen local unemployment and could decimate the country's reserve forests further. As no one-size-fits-all policy was available, she called on UNHCR and the World Bank to measure country-specific costs in order to establish most suitable policies for individual refugee-hosting countries.

#### **Statements made in exercise of the right of reply**

102. The representative of **Hungary**, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, criticized the statement made by Belarus. She reiterated that the European Union Pact on Asylum and Migration fully adhered to international law and had been well received by UNHCR and IOM. Therefore, she rejected all political accusations by Belarus at the meeting, as well as any attempts to instrumentalize refugees.

### **6. Governance**

103. The **Chairperson** explained that delegations were invited to suggest issues for inclusion



in the High Commissioner's opening statement at the upcoming seventy-fifth plenary session of the Executive Committee, noting that the statement would form the basis for the annual plenary session's general debate.

104. The representative of the **Kingdom of the Netherlands** noted firstly that the route-based approach should be considered more thoroughly. Secondly, he wished to see more focus on sustainable programming, particularly from MHPSS and localization perspectives, and on how those two aspects could be further integrated into sustainable programming.

105. The representative of **Australia** said that her country would welcome the High Commissioner concentrating on the role of durable solutions and complementary pathways. She also voiced an interest in hearing from the High Commissioner about how resettlement and complementary pathways could be used to support the humanitarian system more broadly.

106. The representative of **Germany** expressed an interest in three principal topics. They were climate and displacement, challenges and opportunities for female refugees, and interagency coordination.

107. The representative of **Uganda** said that her delegation would like to hear the High Commissioner talk more about durable solutions and complementary pathways, as well as how they would be financially supported, in view of declining funding levels. Furthermore, she wanted further discussions on the sustainability of financing for supporting refugee integration into host countries and the Office's strategic financial planning going forward, as the Office was continuing to depend on declining voluntary contributions from its top donors.

108. The representative of **South Africa** noted that her country was most interested in the route-based approach, most notably, the role of countries of origin towards countries of transit and hosting countries.

109. The representative of **Kenya** laid out her delegation's two key areas of interest. The first topic was the developmental approaches used by UNHCR and partnerships with developmental actors in countries of origin. The second was the Office's approach to amplifying the call for peace as a key measure to end violent conflict, which would help to reduce forced displacement significantly.

110. The representative of **Canada** outlined a range of measures that he wished to see reflected in the High Commissioner's opening statement. They included efforts in relation to gender, the Office's role in coordinating system reform and the focus on urgent life-saving response, in addition to other topics put forward by other delegations previously.

111. The representative of **Nigeria** asked whether States could submit topics for inclusion in the High Commissioner's statement after the conclusion of the meeting. The **Chairperson** confirmed that it would be possible to do so.

## 7. Any other business

112. The **Chairperson** explained the next steps following the meeting and provided details about the process and dates for drafting the procedural report of the Standing Committee, circulating it and submitting any amendments thereto. She also noted that the relevant documents and presentations for the meeting would be made available on the Standing Committee website.

113. She invited the national delegations to put forward any relevant AOB points, but none were put forward.

114. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the Chairperson declared ninetieth meeting of the Standing Committee closed.

*The meeting adjourned at 5.46 p.m.*