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

**Distr.: General**  
10 September 2024

English only

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**Standing Committee**

**Ninetieth meeting**

**1-2 July 2024**

Held at the at the International Conference Centre (CICG), Geneva

**Summary record,\* Monday, 1 July 2024, at 10 a.m.**

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

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

### **Opening of the meeting**

1. The **Chairperson** declared open the ninetieth meeting of the Standing Committee and said she took it that the Committee wished to approve the requests by Burundi and Mauritania to participate as observers.
2. *It was so agreed.*
3. The **Chairperson** announced that, following the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to expand the membership of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme from 108 to 110 States, Guatemala and Ukraine had been elected members on 9 April 2024.

### **Briefing on the Chairperson's mission to the UNHCR operation in Mauritania in May 2024**

*A video presenting the highlights of the visit was played.*

4. The **Chairperson** thanked the Government of Mauritania for its warm welcome; Mr. Mohamed El Habib Bal, Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations Office at Geneva, who had briefed her in advance of the visit and met with her to discuss her observations upon her return; and the UNHCR Office in Mauritania, which had ensured the success of the visit.
5. Mauritania, which currently held the presidency of the African Union, was witnessing the arrival of growing numbers of refugees, particularly from Mali. Over 200,000 Malian refugees were currently residing in south-eastern Mauritania, 100,000 of them in the Mbera camp. UNHCR had declared the situation an emergency in February 2024 and, in cooperation with its partners, had developed an inter-agency contingency plan for new arrivals. At the Global Refugee Forum 2023, the Government had pledged to include refugees in the national education system and in social protection schemes on an equal footing with its nationals and to transform the Mbera camp into an integrated, climate-adaptive human settlement by 2027. It had also renewed the pledges, made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, to include all refugees in the civil registry and guarantee their access to health services and the labour market.
6. The objectives of her visit had been to better understand the Office's humanitarian operations in the country; examine key issues of interest, including inter-agency cooperation, climate change and the situation of women and girls; and highlight the Government's contribution to refugee protection in the region, including its decade-long open-door policy, support for inclusion and twofold approach to meeting the needs of both refugees and the host population.
7. She had first visited the town of Bassiknou, near the border with Mali, where local leaders had described the challenging situation in the region. Their assertion that both the municipal authorities and the local population were extending their hospitality to refugees had been confirmed by the refugees themselves. In the nearby Mbera camp she had witnessed leadership, initiative and resilience among the members of the refugee community, who had created opportunities for themselves and for the local population. She had also seen impressive instances of leadership, including by women; inter-agency cooperation that could serve as examples of best practice; and efforts by UNHCR and local authorities to combat the effects of climate change under difficult circumstances. The Mbera Fire Brigade, which had received the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award in 2022, worked with the host community; it had mobilized over 500 volunteers to fight bush fires in and around the camp and conduct awareness-raising campaigns and had planted 59,000 trees in the region.
8. She had met with the Women's Resources Committee, made up of over 80 women volunteers in the camp who assisted new arrivals, identified at-risk women and referred them to appropriate services, advocated for gender equality and helped to prevent gender-based violence. Among other things, they had designed and produced reusable sanitary pads that allowed girls to go to school. She had also met with a group of women who had arrived in the camp over the past six months, many of whom had experienced physical and sexual violence, primarily by foreign armed groups, during their escape from Mali. All of them had emphasized that they felt safe in Mauritania. Meetings between women involved in humanitarian development in the camp and the host community,

organized by the UNHCR Office in Mauritania, could serve as a best practice to be replicated elsewhere.

9. She had attended a meeting with representatives of the United Nations and other national and international organizations within the framework of refugee coordination. The meeting, at which the Office's leadership had been evident, had demonstrated the effectiveness of inter-agency cooperation; for example, the participants had made their presentations not individually, but as groups of agencies working in thematic clusters. She had been impressed by the commitment of UNHCR and the local authorities to combating climate change, including by handing out flasks in order to prevent the use of plastic bottles. The Office's staff was beginning to place solar panels on their own houses and within the refugee camp.

10. Her visit to the port city of Nouadhibou had been conducted jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for which she also served as Council Chairperson. The local authorities had acknowledged the Office's crucial role in managing mixed movements in the city. She had spoken with refugees and migrants, who had conveyed their frustration about their current situation and the uncertainty of their future. Greater support was required in order to meet their basic needs, provide livelihood opportunities and prevent dangerous onward movement. While in Nouadhibou, she had met with "Mama Aisha", who led a network of volunteers which ensured that new arrivals received assistance, minimized conflict between communities and operated a school for refugee and migrant children at the primary and secondary levels.

11. Her visit had concluded in Nouakchott, where she had congratulated the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Education and Education Reform on the Government's efforts to protect and include refugees and on the extraordinary example that it was setting for countries facing similar situations. Both Ministers had reinforced the commitments made during the Global Refugee Forum 2023. While there, she had held round-table discussions with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and with key members of the diplomatic community.

12. It had been clear throughout her visit that openness and opportunity characterized the approach taken by the host Government and host communities and reflected the spirit and drive of the refugees themselves. The Office's work in the country was greatly appreciated; however, Mauritania could not make good on all of its pledges without assistance. She therefore thanked all of the partners who were supporting the Government and civil society in their efforts to find solutions to the challenges faced while continuing to foster peace and stability in the region.

13. The Permanent Representative of **Mauritania** said that UNHCR was doing excellent work under challenging conditions in his country. He thanked the Chairperson for reporting on her visit and reiterated his Government's commitment to ensuring refugees' access to work, issuing birth certificates to all children born in the country and ensuring that refugees benefited from social protection, including access to education and to the national health service. The vast majority of the over 95,000 refugees who had arrived from Mali between January 2023 and April 2024 – adding to the 105,000 previously registered – were women, children and young people. The massive flow of migrants into the country since 2012 had placed serious pressure on food security in a region where the environment, whose natural resources were already limited, was severely affected by climate change. His Government was working with its humanitarian and development partners to support refugees and host communities under a national strategy aimed at fostering inclusive and sustainable economic growth and was continuing to invest in community projects, according particular attention to women and children. He echoed the Chairperson's observation that Mauritania alone could not overcome all of the challenges that it faced and stressed that his country would continue to count on the support of its partners.

#### 1. **Adoption of the agenda (EC/75/SC/CRP.10)**

14. *The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Opening remarks by the Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)**

15. The **Deputy High Commissioner** (UNHCR) said that in the current humanitarian landscape, the need to protect could not be more urgent. The number of displaced persons worldwide was greater than ever before, the solutions were more complex, and climate-related emergencies were becoming a more frequent driver of forced displacement; 4 of the 7 emergencies declared by UNHCR since the eighty-ninth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2024 had been climate-

related. In 2024 alone, UNHCR and its partners had responded to an emergency every 10 days while managing protracted crises in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Syrian Arab Republic and other countries. The Office's mandate had never been more relevant.

16. She expressed her appreciation for the generosity of host countries, many of whom had been welcoming refugees for decades despite economic and social challenges of their own. She thanked the Office's donors for their support, which was not taken for granted, and urged those who were able to contribute more to do so. UNHCR was increasing its efforts to mobilize the resources required in order to meet the needs of the people that it served, which, in 2024, amounted to a budget of some \$10.8 billion. It was expanding its donor base to include non-traditional donors and had strengthened its engagement with the private sector, which had contributed over \$700 million in 2023. As at 1 July 2024, however, just over a quarter of the Office's budget for 2024 was funded. Of even more pressing concern was the limited cash available, which represented just over a month of operational coverage. It was critical that donors who had not yet disbursed funds pledged to UNHCR to do so as early as possible in order to prevent any disruption in the Office's and its partners' ability to operate.

17. In view of the current financial uncertainty and the challenging outlook for 2025, UNHCR was continuing to anticipate and adapt to change. As from 2025, all of its operations would submit multi-year strategies under a results-based approach that would allow for data-driven programming and reporting. The use of common indicators from year to year would allow for improved comparison of results and measurement of progress. The Office was also reviewing its operational approaches in order to build on the momentum generated by the Global Refugee Forum 2023 and on the many pledges to harness the transformational power of inclusion and self-reliance by involving forcibly displaced people in national planning, strengthening their self-reliance and bringing displaced and host communities closer together.

18. Cooperation with private sector development actors in humanitarian response from the outset of a crisis would ensure that programmes were designed sustainably, stimulate growth, generate employment opportunities and reduce reliance on short-term humanitarian funding, which was designed to meet the most urgent needs. Reimagining and redesigning activities through the lens of sustainability would enable UNHCR to redirect its humanitarian focus to the places where it would have the greatest impact on people's lives. The Office was continuing its realignment process by determining where services could be delivered more efficiently, identifying opportunities to leverage the new technical tools available and streamlining financial and administrative functions.

19. Learning was another key element of the Office's ambition to improve. It had invited independent assessments from a variety of entities, including the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC), which had shown that UNHCR was well-positioned for the future. The Office had continued its streamlining efforts by establishing a design and development service that could accommodate new and existing resources with the aim of bringing its people, structures and processes into line with its vision of greater coherence, efficiency and effectiveness, and its reimagining of partnerships and rethinking of its financing model.

20. It would be remiss not to mention the Office's greatest asset: its people and the effect that the rapid and profound changes of recent years have caused tension within the organization as financial constraints and streamlining has meant a reduction in force. It led to the departure of members of the UNHCR family, many of them long-serving and dedicated professionals. While the Office provided career development support and coaching to its staff through its Division of Human Resources, realignment would continue to have a significant impact on staff morale. That is why the Office would continue to remain in constant dialogue with its teams in order to listen to their ideas, suggestions and concerns and to hear and act on their grievances. It had worked tirelessly to build a culture of trust and accountability where all colleagues were empowered to speak out against abuse in all of its forms and report misconduct without fear of retaliation and was reviewing and updating its systems and policies to ensure that staff members knew what was expected of them. In that connection, she drew attention to the side event on the Office's new policy on sexual misconduct.

## 2. Programme budgets and funding

### (a) Update on budgets and funding (E/75/SC/CRP.11)

21. The **Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results** (UNHCR), accompanying her remarks with a PowerPoint presentation, said that the document entitled “Update on budgets and funding (2023 and 2024)” (E/75/SC/CRP.11) showed the final 2023 budget as at 31 December as \$10.9 billion. Five supplementary budgets, representing a combined total of \$817.5 million, had been established in response to the many emergency situations that had arisen or continued during 2023 and the budget for Iraq had been reduced by \$100 million.

22. The total funds available in 2023 stood at \$5.7 billion, 7 per cent less than in 2022, and included \$4.8 billion in net voluntary contributions and \$573 million in carry-over funds. The latter were funds which were carried over from one period to the next and consisted mainly of earmarked contributions received late in the year, which could not be fully programmed and were carried forward to the subsequent year by agreement with the donors, and contributions to multi-year programmes that were received in one period but programmed for use in subsequent years.

23. Expenditure had been \$5.6 billion against a budget of \$10.287 billion in 2022 and \$5.1 billion against a budget of \$10.4 billion in 2023, resulting in a funding gap of 42 per cent in 2022 and 47 per cent in 2023 that had reduced the Office’s capacity to deliver its planned results. While UNHCR was grateful for the generous contributions made, difficult decisions would continue to be required. Unearmarked contributions were particularly important as they allowed the Office to respond flexibly to the most urgent needs.

24. In terms of expenditure by impact area, 2023 had seen a \$313.6 million increase in impact area 1: Protect (attaining favourable protection environments); a slight decrease in impact areas 2: Respond (realizing basic rights in safe environments) and 3: Empower (empowering communities and achieving gender equality); and an increase in impact area 4: Solve (securing solutions), which was related to opportunities for resettlement, complementary pathways and return to countries of origin. As for expenditure by outcome area, the 2023 levels were, overall, slightly lower than those for 2022.

25. The original approved budget of \$10.6 billion for 2024 had been increased to \$10.8 billion through the supplementary budget in response to the dire needs in the Sudan and the surrounding countries. In 2024, UNHCR was continuing to respond to 17 emergencies and humanitarian needs were still growing. As soon as they were received, additional funds would be used to close key gaps and meet urgent needs, particularly in the areas of well-being, including cash assistance and core relief items, which were life-saving in many circumstances; housing; health; and return. The 2024 activities were highly prioritized against needs and as a result of the funding gap, the Office’s operations faced difficult trade-offs.

26. The **Director of the Division of External Relations** (UNHCR), accompanying her remarks with a PowerPoint presentation, said that the budget was 7 per cent less well funded in 2024 than in 2023 and with a projected gap of \$7.98 billion, the Office was currently funded at only 26 per cent of its total needs. In recent years, there had been great progress in diversifying the donor base through an increase in private sector donations and increased contributions from major donors. In that connection, she was pleased to announce that the United Arab Emirates had returned to the top donor group. She also thanked the other donors that had made the largest contributions to date in 2024, namely the European Union, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Sweden and the United States of America.

27. She referred delegates to the recently published *Flexible funding report 2023*, which provided an overview of the ways in which flexible (unearmarked or softly earmarked) funding had made a difference in 2023 by providing a lifeline for millions of people in need. The most valuable of the two types of funding was, of course, unearmarked, without which UNHCR would be unable to deliver on the first day of an emergency and to support any overlooked emergencies. There was considerable overlap between the top 10 UNHCR operations that had received unearmarked funding in 2023 and the most underfunded operations, including those in the Sudan and three of the States that were receiving arrivals from that country. Large-scale emergencies usually attracted considerable funding but that had not been the case with the Sudan, which continued to pose a real challenge in 2024.

28. She thanked the top donors of flexible and unearmarked funding. In 2023, governments had given \$440 million, accounting for 61 per cent of all unearmarked funding. Valuable contributions had also been also received from the top 10 private sector donors and from the low- and middle-income countries that continued to host a disproportionately large share – 75 per cent – of the world’s refugees. Least developed countries were hosting more than 21 per cent of all refugees worldwide and required sustained and meaningful support.

29. The 17 operations described in the forthcoming Underfunded report 2024 accounted for approximately 41 per cent of the current budget and covered close to 43 per cent of the persons served by UNHCR; around 57 per cent of flexible funding had been allocated to those operations, for which she again thanked the donors. Priority was given to life-saving assistance, including the provision of cash, basic needs, shelter and medical care, and core protection activities in countries such as Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen. Core protection activities also included access to territory, registration and documentation in, for example, the Sudan; protection or border monitoring in the Sahel; combating gender-based violence in Afghanistan; and ensuring child protection in Colombia. Other priorities included inclusion, community engagement and education.

30. In the Sudan, the Office could only support about 13 per cent of the 426,500 people targeted for shelter assistance in 2024; it planned to distribute cash assistance to 146,737 people but current funding would cover only 12 per cent of them, leaving close to 90 per cent without shelter. In Burkina Faso, gender-based violence had risen significantly in 2023 with the number of rapes increasing by 6.3 per cent and sexual assaults by 261 per cent; however, owing to limited response capacity and underfunding, some 36 per cent of rape survivors had received no medical care. More funding was necessary and she invited donors who were not contributing to do so and smaller donors to increase their contributions.

31. In Bangladesh, although 45,000 shelters required annual repairs, funding limitations had allowed only 10,000 of them to be maintained. In the Cox’s Bazar refugee camps, which were particularly vulnerable to climate change and disasters, 35,000 households lacked safe housing during critical weather events.

32. In Colombia, the Office aimed to support 100,000 of the 6.9 million internally displaced persons who required assistance and reparations. The legalization of informal neighbourhoods was essential to their integration into urban areas with access to amenities and services. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities were disproportionately affected.

33. In 2024, UNHCR had initially aimed to facilitate 300,000 health visits for refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, owing to financial constraints, only 60,000 visits had been conducted, leaving some 200,000 refugees unable to access essential health services.

34. The representative of **Uganda**, speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the growing global humanitarian crisis was exacerbating the already-high number of displaced persons and the consistent decline in funding was only worsening the pressure on host countries, many of which were developing countries in Africa. In light of the 16.8 per cent decline in voluntary contributions, she called on States that were able to do so to contribute generously. Africa deserved the same generosity as had been shown in response to crises in other parts of the world.

35. The increase in the Office’s expenditure in response to forced displacement from the Sudan to neighbouring countries was sadly insufficient. The unprecedented 10 million displaced persons in one country – the Sudan – in just 14 months had increased flows to neighbouring countries that were already burdened with large numbers of refugees, yet funding in 2023 had decreased by 7.6 per cent for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, 11.5 per cent for West and Central Africa, 16.7 per cent for Southern Africa and 15.6 per cent for the Middle East and North Africa.

36. Although the African States, many of them host countries, were already fulfilling the policy pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum 2023, seven months later they were still waiting to hear when the pledges made by their donor partners would be implemented. Because addressing the root causes of displacement and providing durable solutions were the most viable options, she was concerned to see that impact area 4 (securing solutions) remained the least funded.

37. While appreciating the explanation regarding carry-over funds, she reiterated her Group’s request for a breakdown of the purposes for which those funds were earmarked. She emphasized its

appreciation of donor countries and partners, and particularly of the unearmarked funding that allowed UNHCR to provide assistance to the areas and situations most in need. Africa would continue to play its part in affording safety to persons of concern to the Office, and she implored its partners to match those efforts. Lastly, she expressed her Group's support for the draft decision contained in Annex VIII to document EC/75/SC/CRP.11.

38. The representative of **Ethiopia** said that Ethiopia was the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa and had been seriously impacted by the chronic underfunding of recent years; in 2023, only 36 per cent of UNHCR operations in his country had been funded even as the number of displaced persons continued to rise. In addition to 1.1 million refugees and asylum-seekers, Ethiopia continued to welcome refugees from, among other countries, Somalia and the Sudan on a daily basis. The funding shortfall affected refugee-hosting countries disproportionately. His Government was under enormous pressure to make difficult decisions regarding the provision of service to refugees, and urgent support was required in order to ensure the continuity of services without which hundreds of thousands of people would lose access to education and health care. He encouraged donors to continue to respond generously and to allocate unearmarked funding to UNHCR.

39. The representative of **Mozambique** expressed his concern at the 7.5 per cent reduction in available funding for 2023. He commended the Office's work in that challenging context and echoed its appeal to donors to continue to respond generously in order to meet the needs of the 2024 annual budget, including through unearmarked funds. While recognizing that all budget impact areas were interconnected, he encouraged UNHCR to evaluate the need to reinforce the budget line for impact area 4, which was the least well-funded despite the need to prioritize durable solutions pursuant to the Global Compact on Refugees. He regretted the decline in funding and expenditure in 2023 and the carry-over to 2024 of funds that had not been spent and supported the Office's efforts to further expand its operations in light of the growing need for immediate support.

40. The representative of **Egypt**, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, thanked UNHCR for its protection efforts. In light of the decline in funding, the Office's operations must be reorganized and prioritized with a view to full implementation. She called on the international community to assist host and transit countries in a spirit of burden- and responsibility-sharing. In that connection, she drew attention to the increase in the number of internally displaced persons, including in Arab countries, following crises such as the earthquake in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye and the floods in Libya in 2023.

41. The Arab Group was troubled by the rise in the number of refugees in countries in the region. It hoped that UNHCR would help the Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and especially in Gaza, where the humanitarian crisis resulting from the operations conducted by the Israeli Defence Forces had led to the displacement of 85 per cent of the population. She called on all parties to implement an immediate ceasefire and on Israel to lift the siege. During the Global Refugee Forum 2023, various pledges had been made with a view to reinforcing stability in the region.

42. The Arab Group was also concerned at the humanitarian crisis that had displaced over 27 million Sudanese people to neighbouring countries. She encouraged States and other donors to increase their contributions in order to bridge the funding gap and said that the Group's member States were committed to providing protection to refugees, internally displaced persons and others served by UNHCR with the help of the international community. It was important to avoid politicization in the hosting of refugees.

43. She thanked the Office and its partners for their efforts to plan for the safe return of refugees. When determining priorities in the implementation of programmes, a balance should be struck in order to help host communities respond to the emergency needs of refugees and internally displaced persons. Cooperation was essential in addressing the root causes of displacement and asylum-seeking.

44. The representative of **Kenya** thanked the Office and donors for their generous contributions, which made the life-saving work of UNHCR possible. She requested clarification of the aspects affected by the decline in available funds and of the measures taken in order to bridge that gap. Noting the \$56 million increase in voluntary contributions in 2023 for implementation in future years (an increase of 27.6 per cent), she asked which specific operations and sectors those resources would cover. The 47.7 per cent gap between available funds and the needs of those served was a matter of great concern and she would be grateful for information on any remedial measures taken. In light of the 7.7 per cent (\$72.1 million) decrease in expenditure for the East and Horn of

Africa, despite the increased number of forcibly displaced persons in the region owing to a number of ongoing crises, she requested an explanation of the rationale for the budgetary reduction and of the efforts to address the situation.

45. The funding of humanitarian operations should be guided by the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence in the best interests of the people in need rather than by other factors. She would like to know how expenditure in impact area 4 had remained persistently underfunded from 2022 to 2024, as seen from table II.4 in document EC/75/SC/CRP.11. The issue of continued underfunding for that area, which Kenya had raised in several UNHCR budget meetings, was an impediment to longer-term stability in the context of displacement and she believed that if solutions were funded, expenditure in the other three impact areas would decrease.

46. She saw from Annex II, which showed the original and current budget by impact area and interim expenditure for 2024, that in three other regions impact area 4 was better funded than impact area 3. The same attention should be paid to the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, where area 4 was the least well-funded. Underfunding solutions accentuated fragility and undermined resilience and prevention. Moreover, there was the least investment in solutions in the most protracted cases. She had taken note of the Office's efforts to leverage its partnerships with development actors, international financial institutions and others and urged UNHCR to sustain that momentum, bearing in mind that safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation remained the preferred solution for the majority of refugee situations. She thanked the donors who had provided unearmarked funding and called on others to do so in order to ensure that humanitarian engagements were flexible and agile and that the most pressing needs were addressed, whenever and wherever they occurred. In closing, she requested an itemized budget with a breakdown by country operation.

47. The representative of the **Republic of Korea** thanked the Office for explaining its approach to prioritizing budgets in light of the uncertain funding situation but requested further details on programmes and activities with a breakdown by region and impact area. Given that regional expenditure would naturally fluctuate over the years, UNHCR should hold regional budget briefings and provide more targeted communications to the relevant Member States and other interested parties. Although the Junior Professional Officer programme represented a small proportion of the budget, it should be implemented strategically in order to address the underrepresentation of certain subregions and countries.

48. His Government was increasing its unearmarked funding contribution from \$3.8 million in 2023 to nearly \$18 million in 2024 pursuant to one of its commitments at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. Combined with the contributions of private donors, that placed the Republic of Korea among the top five contributors of unearmarked funding.

49. Turning to the draft decision on budgets and funding for 2023 and 2024, he said that the mention of "flexible and unearmarked contributions" in the final paragraph was redundant; the draft decision should read either "flexible contributions" or "unearmarked and softly unearmarked contributions" if there was a need to emphasize those specific components.

50. The representative of **Switzerland** expressed concern regarding the reduction in expenditure from 2022 to 2023 in all regions except West and Central Africa, which the report attributed to the increased flow of refugees from the Sudan to Chad. However, multiple conflicts in 2023 had led to significant displacement in other regions, notably the Middle East and North Africa and Asia and the Pacific, both of which had seen a decrease in expenditure of over 15 per cent. He asked the Office to explain what had led to such an unequal change in allocation.

51. Budget allocations had also changed significantly in 2024 without sufficient explanation in a comparative table. In particular, he would like to know the rationale for increasing the percentage allocations in all regions of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and the Americas while decreasing them in Asia and the Pacific, and especially, in Europe. He would welcome an explanation of the decision to significantly decrease the allocations to impact areas 1 and 2, which focused on protection and response, while increasing funding for impact areas 3 and 4, which focused on empowerment and solutions, and the consequences in terms of the prioritization of operations.

52. The representative of **Canada** commended the Office's achievements in addressing the needs of refugees and displaced persons worldwide; the decision to prioritize life-saving emergency response had been difficult but necessary. She welcomed efforts to foster strategic partnerships in order to ensure that UNHCR could continue to fulfil its protection mandate, build resilience and find



sustainable solutions to the forced displacement crisis. The Office should continue to prioritize resources, based on need, across regions and crises and to focus on the most vulnerable populations while taking protection considerations into account.

53. The Office's recent report on sustainable programming reflected the need for a shift in approach in order to strengthen its work and remain accountable to affected populations. However, such a shift could have potential implications for its ability to respond promptly and effectively in emergencies and she wondered how the change would inform budget allocations and management. Her Government was encouraged to see substantial growth in private sector contributions thanks to efforts to diversify funding sources and would like to learn more about the strategies for aligning private sector donations with actual needs on the ground. Further information on how the feedback and response systems for forcibly displaced persons contributed to meaningful needs assessment and budgeting and increased accountability to affected populations would also be welcome.

54. The representative of the **Sudan** commended the Office's efforts to help the most vulnerable, especially in her own and neighbouring countries. As a result of the horrific human rights violations, brutal attacks on civilians and crimes against humanity committed by the Rapid Support Forces, 24.8 million people were in need of assistance. Sudan also faced the world's greatest displacement crisis; 10 million people had been forcibly displaced, 8 million of them internally, and about 2 million people had crossed the country's borders. Despite the severity of the crisis, which had left millions in need of humanitarian assistance and at risk of famine, only 10 per cent of the Refugee Response Plan had been funded. There was also a lack of support for the survivors of gender-based violence.

55. Her Government had taken steps to expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid, including across the country's borders with Chad, Egypt and South Sudan and had authorized the use of three airports for humanitarian flights. She urged the international community to provide more flexible and unearmarked funding so that UNHCR could better plan and respond to crises in a timely and effective manner.

56. The representative of **Morocco**, noting that expenditure in the Middle East and North Africa had fallen in 2023 despite higher levels of forced displacement caused by new conflicts, reaffirmed his Government's commitment to addressing the challenges faced by refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Morocco's financial contribution in 2024 had risen three-fold in comparison to 2023 and formed part of a broader strategy to support regional stability and humanitarian response. His Government had consistently advocated a comprehensive approach to refugee assistance that included both immediate relief and long-term efforts to address the root causes of displacement and promote durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement in third countries while taking care to allay the concerns of governments.

57. Appropriate registration of refugees and asylum-seekers and accurate data collection, which facilitated needs assessment and provided refugees with official documentation and legal status, were crucial to the development of tailored assistance programmes. The regional bureaux played a particularly important role in providing accurate statistics in line with the Office's standards.

58. The representative of **Uganda**, noting that her country had received only 19 per cent of the necessary resources at a time of increasing displacement, said that she welcomed the continued call for more flexible, unearmarked funding. Despite her Government's progressive policies, it was not receiving sufficient earmarked support from partners. Donors should trust UNHCR to make the right budget allocation decisions and should put humanitarian needs above their own interests.

59. She urged the Office to prioritize impact area 4, which had been consistently underfunded. It was particularly painful to learn that funding deficits had resulted in a failure to provide support to victims of sexual harassment and abuse. In the wake of the Global Refugee Forum 2023, donors should consider what further contributions they could make to ensure that needs were met.

60. The representative of the **United States of America** reiterated his Government's support for the Office's work and its solidarity with refugee-hosting countries. In the context of protracted conflicts and increasingly severe natural disasters, traditional government humanitarian funding alone was insufficient. It was vital to seek new partnerships, particularly with the private sector, in order to meet immediate needs and advance durable solutions. He called on all donors, both traditional and new, to ensure that the Office could sustain its essential operations and respond to emerging crises worldwide.

61. UNHCR should continue its strategic prioritization efforts with a deliberate focus on sustainable approaches in impact areas 1 and 4, which focused on protection and solutions. He therefore regretted the 3.7 percent reduction in the allocations for solutions in the budget update as of 30 April 2024. The Office should critically examine the effectiveness of its interventions, including by assessing the medium- to long-term outcomes of its support for voluntary return.

62. In prioritizing new partnerships, innovation and solutions, his Government focused on increasing economic and social inclusion in order to reduce long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance; investing in protection from gender-based violence; and strengthening its refugee admissions programme. It was also working on ending statelessness, enhancing climate resilience and promoting refugee-inclusive education in line with its commitments at the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

63. Humanitarian assistance alone could not solve issues such as gender-based violence and climate change. Greater engagement with multilateral development banks and the private sector was essential in preventing long-term reliance on humanitarian aid in protracted situations. He would welcome further discussion of the Office's role in such areas and its coordination with development actors and other stakeholders. Enhanced oversight and accountability in relation to humanitarian funding were a precondition for his Government's continued support of UNHCR.

64. The representative of **Brazil** said that the heavy reliance on voluntary contributions could affect the Office's ability to respond to the needs of the people that it served. She commended the donors of unearmarked contributions and encouraged UNHCR to continue its efforts to increase their visibility. More flexible and unearmarked funding would enable a rapid response to emergencies and demonstrate confidence in the Office's ability to deliver aid efficiently and impartially. Funding cuts in the budget for the Americas had had an impact on operations in Brazil, notably humanitarian response and efforts to ensure the economic inclusion of refugees and vulnerable migrants. Her Government stood ready to collaborate with the Office in setting priorities for her country.

65. The representative of **Australia** expressed concern regarding the projected funding gap for 2024 and the decrease in expenditure in 2023, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, despite the need to find durable solutions for refugees in the context of new and protracted displacements in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Although the Office's reporting on flexible funding was commendable, she would welcome further information on how humanitarian needs had been prioritized in the 2024 budget, how flexible and unearmarked funding had been allocated across regions and how UNHCR engaged with displaced and stateless persons when developing its budget.

66. She thanked host States for their ongoing commitment to supporting and protecting displaced and stateless persons. Her Government was pleased to provide predictable, multi-year, flexible funding to UNHCR and was working to increase the flexibility of that funding. It also contributed to pooled mechanisms that supported underfunded crises and had recently announced an aid package of more than AU\$20 million to support Sudanese refugees and host countries in the Horn of Africa, in addition to the funding for that region announced at the Global Refugee Forum 2023. In closing, she welcomed the prioritization of cash support as an efficient, flexible means of assistance that enhanced refugees' self-agency.

67. The representative of **Germany** expressed concern regarding the growing needs of forcibly displaced persons. His Government welcomed the efforts to address the most urgent humanitarian and protection needs through prioritization and efficiency but would like to see greater transparency in that process. He welcomed the introduction of feedback and response systems for forcibly displaced persons in two thirds of the Office's operations and called for a further roll-out of those systems in order to improve accountability to the affected populations, stressing that they should also be accessible to women, people with disabilities and other groups with increased protection needs. UNHCR must continue to evaluate its operations and policies with a view to increased efficiency, transparency and accountability; address the concerns expressed by OIOS regarding collaboration with host countries, particularly in light of the reduced funding levels; and endeavour more generally, to operate as efficiently as possible.

68. Germany was the second largest contributor to UNHCR, the top contributor of flexible funding in 2023 and a major host country. His Government remained committed to supporting refugees and other host countries, but more donors must share that responsibility. He thanked the governments that had increased their support, including the Republic of Korea, pursuant to the Global Compact on Refugees. In closing, he asked the Office to include consideration of the role of

pooled funds in future budget updates and endorsed the proposal of the representative of the Republic of Korea regarding the wording of the draft decision.

69. The representative of **France** commended the efforts of the Government of Mauritania to welcome refugees in an inclusive manner and ensure their participation in decision-making. Her Government was pleased to be contributing financially to the Office's operations in that country in 2024. It had also provided more than €97 million to other UNHCR operations, a significant proportion of which was unearmarked, and remained fully committed to its role as co-convenor of the Global Refugee Forum. France was leading a number of initiatives in response to displacement crises, including, in cooperation with the Government of Germany and the European Union, the International Humanitarian Conference for the Sudan and neighbouring countries.

70. It was clear that UNHCR was in a fragile financial situation. States had a collective responsibility to help it fulfil its mandate and carry out vital operations for refugees, host communities and internally displaced persons and some Member States were in a position to increase their contributions. She welcomed the efforts to diversify funding sources, including by mobilizing the private sector, and called for greater solidarity and burden-sharing in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

71. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** expressed concern regarding the increase in displacement noted in the Office's Global Trends report 2023 and stressed that agility was essential in addressing the growing global challenges. As one of the top providers of unearmarked funding, his Government was committed to supporting the Office's efforts to respond flexibly to such challenges. It welcomed the update provided but was concerned about the large funding gap in 2023. It endorsed the draft decision, including its addition of a supplementary budget.

72. Welcoming the new private sector engagement strategy and ongoing efforts to bring about a strategic shift in the area, he stressed the importance of private sector collaboration as both a source of funding and an additional mechanism for achieving results. UNHCR should continue to invest in innovative financial tools such as insurance financing and should further improve its operational effectiveness, including by consolidating reforms through the business transformation programme and implementing the recommendations of MOPAN. It was particularly important to improve evidence-based, multi-year planning and programming; rethink refugee responses from a longer-term perspective; and improve consultation with the Executive Committee and "no surprises" reporting to funders.

73. As humanitarian funding continued to be stretched, it was vital to address both the causes and the consequences of displacement with a focus on durable solutions in the form of voluntary, safe and dignified return; local integration; and resettlement. Further efforts should also be made to improve complementary pathways and incentivize development actors to address the underlying development challenges in fragile contexts. He welcomed the recent paper on sustainable programming and looked forward to receiving additional information in due course.

74. The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** said that his Government was concerned about the Office's budget and its capacity to provide adequate support. Budget reductions had not been uniformly distributed between country offices and had had a disproportionate impact on the UNHCR field office in Tehran and across the region. His Government was hosting the world's largest proportion of refugees, but the aid received was far from sufficient to meet their basic health needs and the mass influx of Afghan refugees, immigrants and asylum-seekers had placed considerable strain on his country's national resources.

75. It was vital to ensure that humanitarian issues, especially those concerning refugees, remained free from political influence. The unilateral coercive measures taken against his country had led to significant restrictions in, among other things, its hosting capacity and had exacerbated the challenges of managing large numbers of refugees. Such measures represented a serious obstacle for any State that wished to support host countries within the framework of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The influx of refugees was not only a humanitarian crisis, but also a critical issue for regional security and stability. Allocating a larger share of the Office's budget to operations in the Islamic Republic of Iran would help to address the root causes of displacement, enhance regional stability and prevent further conflict.

76. The representative of **Jordan** said that the reduction in the budget allocated to the Middle East and North Africa region had decreased the available support for refugees in Jordan. He thanked

donor governments for their contributions, which were, however, insufficient to meet the challenges faced by host countries. It was therefore vital to increase unearmarked funding. Particular attention should be paid to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic; his Government needed more support for its efforts to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees on behalf of the international community.

77. The Observer for **Burundi** thanked the Office for the speed with which Burundi's request for observer status had been granted. He acknowledged the importance of finding durable solutions to refugee situations and reiterated his Government's commitment in that regard. UNHCR had supported the voluntary repatriation of more than 210,000 Burundian refugees since 2017. Burundi was also a host country for refugees from neighbouring countries and had experienced internal displacement resulting from climate change.

78. The **Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results** (UNHCR) acknowledged that 2023 had been a challenging year in terms of prioritization and the gap between needs and funding. UNHCR was implementing several strategies in an effort to address those challenges and was endeavouring to prioritize core protection and life-saving assistance through activities that only it could provide, such as access to territory, border monitoring, registration and support for capacity-building in the area of asylum. Another priority was emergency response through the provision of cash; shelter; core relief items; water, sanitation and hygiene services; and nutrition. However, the reduction in funding had made it necessary to target even vital aid in such a way that many highly vulnerable people missed out on support. Where possible, unearmarked funding was used to fill gaps in funding for specific operations.

79. Impact area 4, which focused on solutions, had not been allocated less funding because it was considered unimportant; on the contrary, the Office was aware that investing in solutions would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of work in the other impact areas. However, because the majority of the work in that impact area involved advocacy, capacity-building and support rather than material assistance, its budget would always be relatively streamlined. Expenditure for all of the impact areas except area 1 – for which expenditure was slightly higher as protection had been identified as a priority – amounted to about 50 per cent of what was needed. There was certainly no intention to neglect the other impact areas.

80. Other efforts to manage the shortfall in funding included investment in efficiency measures through partnerships with governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In that context, she had taken note of the remarks made by the representative of Germany regarding the OIOS recommendations. In recognition of the fact that not all partnerships carried the same level of risk, a risk-based approach that would lead to savings in terms of monitoring and management was being applied. Multi-year programming efforts were also starting to pay off with a gradual reduction in dependency on humanitarian funding. In closing, she reassured delegates that the Office was doing everything in its power to optimize the use of resources in response to urgent needs while working on longer-term strategies for reducing those needs.

81. The **Director of the Division of External Relations** (UNHCR) said that she welcomed the increase in contributions announced by the representative of the Republic of Korea and had taken note of the request to clarify the wording of the draft decision. Responding to the request for more details regarding the allocation of flexible funding, she said that further information was provided in the Flexible Funding Report 2023 and through monthly updates. However, the Office would continue to improve its reporting practices.

82. Regarding impact area 4, it had been necessary to reprioritize certain activities, for example by changing the plan to invest in the return of refugees from Chad to Cameroon and the Central African Republic following the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan and the resulting outflow of refugees. That decision was a consequence of the underfunding of operations in the Sudan and the need to prioritize life-saving activities. Such decisions would continue to be necessary, especially if donors continued to earmark their contributions or even increased the level of earmarking. An increase in unearmarked funding would enable UNHCR to take action where it was most needed.

83. The **Head of the Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization Service** (UNHCR), responding to questions, said that in the majority of cases, earmarked funding was allocated to the situations of greatest need as demonstrated by the considerable overlap between the top 20 recipients and the countries featured in the forthcoming Underfunded Report 2024. It was often the case that when a particular crisis was in the news, private sector donors took more of an interest.

84. With regard to pooled funding, he said that, particularly over the past two years, the Office had made a significant effort to engage with the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), which played an important role in emergency response and overlooked crises. Perhaps the most revealing statistic was that in 2023, CERF had been the second largest donor to the Sudan situation response, thereby ensuring that United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, were able to respond. It, too, was struggling with underfunding, however, as contributions had not risen to the level of humanitarian need. He thanked all of the donors who were providing invaluable support to CERF and other pooled funds.

85. The Chairperson said she took it that the Standing Committee wished to adopt the draft decision contained in Annex VIII to document EC/75/SC/CRP.11.

86. *The draft decision was adopted.*

**(b) Global Report 2023**

87. The **Director of the Division of External Relations** (UNHCR) said that although the Office was facing extreme funding challenges, it was important to recognize the tremendous efforts of refugee-hosting States, the support received from donors and the global momentum behind its efforts. The 2023 Global Report showed how UNHCR was adapting to a changing environment with more emergencies, more protracted refugee situations and less recourse to humanitarian funding; how its work was evolving to meet the challenges of internal displacement, climate change, and mixed movements; and how it was achieving its mission by leading and by collaborating with a wide array of partners, not least through the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

88. Although it was very short of funds, especially flexible funds, with the support of Member States it had been able to act in ways that were life-saving and life-changing for millions of people. It had responded to crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere, acting to protect, assist and empower people in partnership with a dedicated global community. As a result, more refugees were being resettled in third countries, enrolled in universities and included in local economies with the chance to work and open a bank account. Over 5 million internally displaced persons and 1 million refugees had returned home and over 32,000 had acquired citizenship or had their nationality confirmed.

89. For the first time, the 2023 Global Report was entirely web-based. It had been made as accessible and readable as possible and included an executive summary with a guide on how to access and use it. Wherever possible, data was shown in the context of historical trends and was fully downloadable, including annual results reports for 51 operations, in order to show in detail what had been achieved at the country level.

90. The **Director of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results** (UNHCR) said that in addition to the 51 annual results reports, the 2023 Global Report included 66 results-monitoring surveys and other data in line with the Office's commitment to evidence-based decision-making.

91. In 2023, there had been a tremendous increase in the number of people seeking international protection and UNHCR had allocated \$1.5 billion – 30 per cent of its total expenditure – to impact area 1 (attaining favourable protection environments), an increase of around \$300 million over the previous year. Some 20 million people, including 7 million children, had received protection services in 163 countries, including Ethiopia, the Republic of Moldova, the Sudan and Türkiye. Twelve member States, including Chad and the Republic of the Congo, had made significant progress in aligning their legal frameworks with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The average asylum-processing time had been reduced from 489 days in 2022 to 432 in 2023 and in 62 out of 79 countries, more than three quarters of refugees and asylum-seekers had received legally recognized identity documents, another increase over the previous year. Such achievements were proof of the Office's commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of displaced persons.

92. In spite of reduced funding, UNHCR had allocated \$146 million to combating gender-based violence, a slight increase over 2022, with the primary recipients Ethiopia, Lebanon, Pakistan and Somalia. Survivors had received services in nearly three quarters of the 122 countries through coordination with over 200 partners, including 60 women-led organizations. The Office had spent \$118 million on child protection services with major expenditures in Colombia, Ethiopia, Lebanon and Ukraine and critical child protection response services had been provided in 61 operations. In

the Sudan, despite the challenges of the ongoing conflict, child protection case management had been strengthened, benefitting almost 10,000 children.

93. With regard to impact area 2 (realizing rights in safe environments), 43 emergencies had been declared in 29 countries and UNHCR continued to address protracted situations worldwide. Response to urgent and other humanitarian needs, its largest area of expenditure, had accounted for \$2.5 billion, a decrease of \$555 million from the 2022 allocation. While some of that decrease stemmed from the fact that Ukraine's neighbouring countries had been able to include Ukrainian refugees in their own national systems, in other countries it had meant difficult trade-offs and further prioritization of cash assistance. Efforts had focused on countries with pressing needs, including Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine. More than \$760 million in cash assistance had been delivered to 7.3 million people in over 110 countries, enabling them to meet their basic needs with dignity.

94. In Ukraine, cash assistance had been provided to almost 900,000 people in 22 regions, earning the Office recognition for its innovative use of blockchain technology. Non-food items, including shelter, basic hygiene supplies and hygiene kits that offered dignity to women and girls had been distributed to 8.1 million people in 72 countries and shelter and housing assistance had reached 2.9 million people in 67 countries. Close to \$300 million had been allocated to health care with the largest expenditures in Bangladesh, Jordan and Lebanon. Essential health-care services had been provided to 14.6 million people, mental health and psychosocial support to 1.3 million people and sexual health services to 1.5 million women and girls. The number of people treated had risen to 191,000 for moderate acute malnutrition and 95,000 for acute malnutrition, largely in emergency response countries and particularly in the Sudan situation.

95. Under impact area 3 (empowering communities and achieving gender equality), UNHCR had spent \$588 million, around 11.5 per cent of its total expenditure and a slight decrease from 2022. Among the countries prioritized were Pakistan, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. Slightly more refugee children – 72 per cent – had been enrolled in primary education; however, economic stability remained a challenge with less than 25 per cent of forcibly displaced people reporting improved incomes. For this reason, self-reliance was now one of the most important pillars of the Office's sustainable programming efforts.

96. Access to financial services had improved and in Uganda, collaboration with the Government had made 39,000 acres of arable land available to 38,500 refugee households, a decision that would increase their inclusion and economic well-being. With a view to empowerment and gender equality, the Office was refining its strategy for ensuring its accountability to affected people. There was a robust feedback and response system and 67 per cent of the 132 countries in which UNHCR worked were implementing multi-channel systems to ensure that the voices of those that it served were heard. More than 48,000 forcibly displaced people had contributed to participatory assessments and \$316 million had been spent on community engagement.

97. Over half a billion dollars, an increase over 2022, had been spent on impact area 4 (securing solutions). The Office had made major allocations to Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, where many forcibly displaced persons had been unable to return home and in a significant increase over 2022, 159,000 refugees had departed for resettlement in 17 countries with UNHCR facilitating two thirds of those departures. It had also helped 1.1 million refugees and 5.1 million internally displaced persons, including over 26,000 Burundian refugees, to return home.

98. Under impact area 5 (including forcibly displaced people in public services and systems), the Office's advocacy had yielded positive results. Inclusion was a powerful tool in reducing assistance costs and transforming lives. In that regard, UNHCR had actively contributed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in over 130 countries, integrating the needs of forcibly displaced and stateless people into development programming.

99. The representative of **Uganda**, speaking on behalf of the African Group, noted with concern that with 9 of the 14 most underfunded country operations, Africa was one of the regions most affected by the record funding gap. While the continent continued to grapple with ongoing socioeconomic challenges, it was committed to its international responsibility to refugees and other persons of concern. With the number of humanitarian crises on the rise, expenditure on impact area 4 should be prioritized and all partners should focus on durable solutions. Commendable creative approaches to the Ukraine crisis in Europe had been found, especially by widening resettlement opportunities, and the same generosity should be extended to the crises in Africa in order to prevent the refugees there from resorting to desperate measures, including travel to Europe on the high seas.

100. Business as usual could not continue; the Office needed more timely, predictable, multi-year, flexible and unearmarked funding. Earmarking voluntary contributions undermined the true intention of humanitarian response, which should be guided by what was most needed rather than by national or political interests. The African Group hoped that the next Global Report would reflect progress in the areas of response, empowerment, protection and, most importantly, durable solutions.

101. The Observer for the **European Union**, speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Georgia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Ukraine and, in addition, Norway, commended the Office's continued commitment to addressing the needs of the rising numbers of forcibly displaced persons while recognizing that severe funding shortfalls were limiting its ability to provide essential services. The catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, new conflicts in the Sudan and Myanmar and ongoing humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Sahel region had forced millions of people to flee their homes and the repercussions of global economic instability, reinforced by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, had made it harder for donors to increase their contributions and placed additional pressure on host communities.

102. The European Union and its member States would continue to play their part in line with the principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing and called on others to do the same. Continued prioritization and targeting efforts and further strengthening of sustainable programming were needed in order to avoid creating long-term dependency in protracted situations. The Office should continue to build on inter-agency synergies such as the One United Nations initiative. In that regard, he welcomed the joint UNHCR-IOM whole-of-route approach to mixed movements. It would be interesting to hear further details about efforts to enhance the interoperability of United Nations systems in line with commitments under the Grand Bargain agreement.

103. Operating in conflict zones presented significant challenges for UNHCR, particularly in light of the increasingly blatant and sometimes deliberate violations of international humanitarian law by certain parties. In some cases, humanitarian access had been obstructed by bureaucratic impediments and increasingly serious security concerns, limiting the scope and speed of the Office's response.

104. However, there were also signs of hope. The European Union and its member States expressed their gratitude to the governments and host communities that had welcomed forcibly displaced persons and supported efforts to address statelessness, strengthen asylum procedures and integrate refugees into national systems with a focus on durable solutions, voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration. They were hosting an increasing number of refugees and were committed to preserving the right to seek and enjoy asylum and the principle of non-refoulement enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Particular attention should be paid to the protection risks faced by women, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable or marginalized people. Gender-responsive approaches were therefore important. The European Union and its member States remained committed to combatting sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation abuse and harassment. They had a zero-tolerance policy on integrity issues such as fraud and misconduct and expected UNHCR to take the same approach, including with rigorous investigations.

105. The representative of **Egypt** said that her country was currently hosting the second-highest number of Sudanese refugees and significant numbers of Syrian refugees among its almost 500,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers of 62 nationalities. Egypt had long provided refugees and asylum-seekers with protection and basic services on an equal basis with its citizens, particularly with regard to health and education. However, funding remained low. Earmarked contributions to specific groups undermined the quality and sustainability of services and placed the burden on refugees, governments and host communities.

106. The global humanitarian response to the forced displacement crisis must be strengthened and funding commitments fulfilled. Despite the efforts of neighbouring countries and international awareness of the gravity of the situation, pledges to support the humanitarian response in the Sudan remained low. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus should be operationalized in order to address the root causes of the conflict while responding to urgent needs and investing in the long-term development of local communities.

107. The representative of the **United States of America** said that the web-based Global Report marked a significant achievement in terms of readability and analytical depth, skilfully employing graphics and visualizations to communicate complex data effectively. The comprehensive executive

summary gave useful insights and the downloadable performance indicators, which his Government had long requested, provided valuable data and allowed detailed analyses of multi-year trends which would be very useful in terms of national funding appropriation. The added context also enhanced transparency and accountability.

108. The representative of **Switzerland** noted with concern that although record numbers of people had been displaced in 2023, the Office's resources had been reduced. For its part, his Government had increased its contribution. The fact that 68 per cent of displaced and stateless people were living in low- or middle-income countries was proof that burden- and responsibility-sharing was still uneven. The reduction in financial and human resources was a worrying sign and had an impact on the Office's ability to support host countries in their efforts, as demonstrated by the figures showing that fewer people were receiving protection services or cash assistance.

109. However, there had been positive changes in host countries' policies as reflected in many, though not all, of the core impact indicators. The increased number of resettlements was particularly welcome. Moving forward, the international community must follow up on the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum 2023, particularly with a view to reducing the causes of forced displacement, resolving conflicts, creating the conditions for safe return and offering durable solutions to those affected.

*The meeting adjourned at 1.10 p.m.*

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