

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

Distr.: General
11 October 2024

English only

Standing Committee

Ninety-first meeting

12-13 September 2024

Held at Palais des Nations, Geneva

Summary record*, Friday, 13 September 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Dr. Katharina Stasch(Germany)

Contents

3. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources (resumed)
 - (c) Oral update on integrity in UNHCR (resumed)
4. International protection: Oral update on the ExCom conclusion on durable solutions and complementary pathways
5. Any other business

* Summary records, prepared by external service providers, summarize the discussions and record decisions taken. Though extensive, they do not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings. Corrections to a summary record should concern only errors made regarding, for example, an official title, and a statistic or a statement reflected from the discussion. A correction does not allow for any additions or for changes to be made of a political character. Any proposed substantive corrections will be checked against the sound recording of the meeting before any change can be made. Requests for corrections should be sent to the ExCom Secretariat: excom@unhcr.org, and any corrected records will be reissued with a new date. Feedback on the summary records may also be sent to the ExCom Secretariat for consideration in the preparation of future summaries.

The meeting was called to order at 3.03 p.m.

3. Management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources (resumed)

(c) Oral update on integrity in UNHCR (resumed)

1. The representative of **Australia**, noting the commitment of UNHCR to fostering an open and respectful workplace free from abuse, discrimination, exploitation and harassment, acknowledged efforts by the organization to codify common standards of conduct for all its personnel to prevent and address sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. She commended the organization's NotOnlyMe tool and welcomed reporting on its support for victims of sexual harassment. She encouraged UNHCR to continue to innovate and share lessons learned across the United Nations system.

2. The representative of **Switzerland** welcomed efforts made to enhance staff capacity and confidence, in particular regarding the code of conduct, risk management and protection against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. With respect to conflicts in the workplace, he took note of and welcomed the UNHCR campaign 'Resolution is better than solution,' which involved an informal approach to conflict that encouraged cases to be discussed and handled within the teams and communities themselves and allowed for escalation. While encouraging continued efforts to enhance staff capacity and confidence, including with its implementing partners, he sought clarification on four matters. First, he asked whether the organization had any training programmes planned that were aimed at local partners in the field. Second, he asked if there were any specific training programmes for managers on sexual or psychological harassment within UNHCR and whether the organization was able to measure results in terms of victim satisfaction in light of increasing calls for the victim care officer to support managers in handling situations of sexual harassment in a victim-centred manner. Third, considering that in 2023, the Ethics Office received about 60 requests for support for protection from retaliation, an increase of 28 per cent compared to the previous year, he wished to know if UNHCR was concerned about that deteriorating situation and whether the organization could explain the cause. Finally, he asked if there were any trends in the types of cases being referred to the Ethics Office or to the Ombudsman and the Mediator, in particular trends associated with sexual harassment and psychological harassment.

3. The representative of **the United States of America** welcomed the proactive approach toward integrity and risk management efforts over the past year. Although she acknowledged that areas for improvement remained, she said it was encouraging that the 2024 annual risk review process produced higher quality risk registers and evidence of increasing risk maturity across the organization and agreed with the assessment. She underlined that operations must continue to strengthen reputational risk management, particularly in complex or sensitive environments, noting that dedicating resources toward a network of risk focal points and senior risk advisors at the country operation and regional bureau level was critical towards that end. Given the important role of implementing partners in risk mitigation, she commended the organization's risk advisors for engaging over 8,600 UNHCR and partner personnel in 2023, representing a 20 per cent increase compared to 2022. She expressed support for the introduction, in 2024, of a Fraud Risk Management Facilitator's Guide for personnel and partners that focused on preventing fraud and corruption. Welcoming early indications that UNHCR staff were using the NotOnlyMe tool after its launch, she said that protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was a priority for the United States of America and further welcomed the organization's updated 2023 to 2025 strategy to address it.

4. The **Deputy High Commissioner (UNHCR)** thanked delegates for their contributions to and ongoing support for the agenda item, discussions for which began in 2018. After providing detailed information on the organization's approach to that particular portfolio, which has involved multiple formats of focused briefings and discussions and a side event in March 2024 with the Inspector General, she emphasized that the Inspector General remained available for further discussions with member States on issues related to the formal processes of integrity in UNHCR. To that end, she urged delegates to reach out to the Office of the Inspector General for briefings while stating that UNHCR would continue to provide updates on the broader thematic issues to identify and close existing gaps.

5. The **Chief Risk Officer (UNHCR)**, emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of risk management, which required wide collaboration within UNHCR, said that the necessary

collaboration within UNHCR had resulted in an increase in the organization's risk maturity and had advanced its risk culture. With regard to local partners, she explained that UNHCR had a dedicated risk management training package for partners, a facilitator's pack, and a training course on fraud risk management for both staff and partners. She also announced that UNHCR was piloting a new training package on reputational risk management and crisis communications dedicated to country operations, as well as working to renew the training course for senior leaders and external relations officers by 2025. Acknowledging the growing interest of member States in briefings and discussions on risk management, she said that subsequent briefings would be scheduled after the internal discussions on the matter had concluded.

6. The **Director of the Ethics Office (UNHCR)** said that refresher training on the Code of Conduct for all personnel was ongoing by the Ethics Office and facilitators in each office where UNHCR operated, both in the field and at headquarters. She noted that it was a mandatory refresher course that took place every year and advised that UNHCR was seeking to increase participants by designing online training to be part of the onboarding of new recruits. She drew attention to the previous year's statistics, which showed an increase in current participation for 2024 compared to 2023. On whether the Ethics Office would be able to sustain its work with the increasing number of requests for guidance and advice, she noted that although the organization was going through turbulent times in view of the realignment process, it was hoped that it would be able to sustain its work. Regarding the question on trends of increased outreach to colleagues in the field and at headquarters, she stressed that the publication of the Policy on Protection Against Retaliation meant that colleagues understood the process better and solicited guidance with the understanding that UNHCR was working with its integrity partners to ensure that staff were not retaliated against because of speaking up.

7. The **Ombudsman and Mediator (UNHCR)** said that the mediation campaign, which had been launched as part of the High Commissioner's initiative, would complement the speak-up culture at the community level and in UNHCR offices to sensitize and build skills of staff, ensuring that cases were addressed and mediated in the offices without the need to defer to the headquarters.

Responding to the representative of Switzerland, he stressed that it was difficult to discern between psychological harassment and sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse due to the psychological element linked also to the latter. He explained the organization's approach to dealing with sexual harassment, which included allowing victims to decide how they wished the sexual harassment situation to be dealt with. He underlined the challenges of dealing with cases involving psychological harassment and noted that the impact of psychological harassment was evident in abusive relationships across the entire United Nations system. In 2023, psychological harassment was an element in about 60 per cent of the cases that were seen at UNHCR, with that figure dropping to 54 per cent in 2024. He said the reduction could be due to the overall increase in the number of cases, resulting in a dilution of the proportion of psychological harassment cases. He echoed previous sentiments of the Director for the Division of Human Resources that although gender parity had been achieved, there remained a lot to be done. While noting that in 60 per cent of psychological harassment cases in 2023, the victims were women, he emphasized the campaign aimed to help teams take the needed action to address the issue.

8. The **Principal Adviser on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (UNHCR)** welcomed the support for the efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including the new policy on addressing sexual misconduct, which was issued by the High Commissioner in May 2024, as well as the Strategy and Action Plan for 2023 to 2025.

9. Noting the interest by delegates to be kept updated on the use and impact of the NotOnlyMe platform and acknowledging that it was too early to assess the impacts of the platform, she highlighted, nonetheless, that 170 accounts had been created since the launch of the platform and victims were registering their accounts of sexual harassment on the platform, including reaching out anonymously to the victim care team and receiving dedicated support to handle situations of sexual harassment. She drew attention to observed matches in accounts which implied that several victims had registered the same alleged perpetrator. She informed that those learning experiences that were being collated from the platform were being shared with the wider United Nations community to investigate possibilities of expanding the use of the platform by other United Nations agencies.

10. Responding to the representative of Switzerland on training on sexual harassment, she noted that in addition to the mandatory United Nations system-wide online training on sexual harassment and abuse of authority, UNHCR had developed a half-day, in-person internal training course that was based on an interactive and experiential learning methodology. The training was part of a broader programme, which included protection from sexual abuse and exploitation and was integrated into 11 different training programmes across UNHCR that were being rolled out in cooperation with the regional bureaux and country operations.

11. With regards to local partnerships, she explained that UNHCR was rolling out the United Nations common assessment form in line with the implementing partner protocol to undertake mandatory assessment of all non-governmental organization partners. To date, 89 per cent of the organization's partners had been assessed. UNHCR was also collaborating with other United Nations agencies on the Inter Agency Standing Committee training package, 'Say No To Sexual Misconduct,' and had launched a joint call for proposals with the International Council on Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) for the fifth year in a row on awareness raising activities towards communities on protection from sexual abuse and exploitation. She said that the collaboration had reached 50 projects in 27 countries, reaching approximately 2 million persons with awareness-raising messages.

4. **International protection: Oral update on the ExCom conclusion on durable solutions and complementary pathways**

12. The **Rapporteur of the Executive Committee**, while providing an update on the process of the Executive Committee's conclusion, recalled that the multi-year work plan adopted by the Executive Committee in 2023 agreed on three topics for the next three years. The first was on 'durable solutions and complementary pathways' in 2024, the second was on 'climate action' as it pertained to the activities of UNHCR in 2025, and the third was on 'education' in 2026. She said that although there had been previous conclusions on durable solutions, there had been none on complementary pathways. As such, the 2024 conclusion served as an initial forecast on complementary pathways and an innovative enabler for solutions. She said that with the prevailing number of forced displacements estimated at 120 million, insufficient solutions placed a tremendous burden and responsibility on host countries. She encouraged considering different ways to foster a significant increase in long-term solutions for refugees.

13. Providing a review of the drafting process of the conclusion, she said that despite the varying points of view during the process, which reflected the diversity of the Executive Committee, all involved demonstrated a constructive and positive approach aimed at ensuring that consensus would be reached for a meaningful and effective text. She expressed appreciation for all those who were involved in the realization of the final document, in particular the Deputy High Commissioner and her team, and pointed out that although the conclusion was ready, sealed and disseminated, it still awaited adoption.

14. The **Chief of Protection Policy and Legal Advice Section, (UNHCR)** thanked all delegations who had contributed to the draft conclusion and paid tribute to the Rapporteur for her immense dedication and professionalism to have reached consensus on the important conclusion.

15. The **Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Africa Group** reaffirmed the continued support of the Africa Group for the conclusion on durable solutions and complementary pathways for refugees. Emphasizing that the African group was awaiting the adoption of the document during the next session of the Executive Committee, he said that the group was convinced that the conclusion would help to provide the necessary guidelines to UNHCR in implementing its mandate.

16. The representative of **Burkina Faso** endorsed the statement made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Africa Group. Her delegation was still concerned about the exponential growth of the number of forcibly displaced persons around the world, which was estimated at 120 million. She said that those compelled to leave their homes because of conflicts and disasters had only two expectations: protection and international solidarity. In the central Sahel area, terrorism was the main driver of the forced displacement of millions of persons who were looking for a peaceful and safe environment. In Burkina Faso, the joint efforts of the government and humanitarian partners had enabled the return of some 905,000 internally displaced persons to

their place of origin, representing 146,820 households. She noted that despite those joint efforts, terrorist attacks continued to forcibly displace people in that region.

17. The representative of **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** welcomed the update as well as the timely finalization of the conclusion and commended the efforts and commitment of the Rapporteur of the Executive Committee in facilitating consensus among the membership.

18. The representative of **Norway** thanked the Rapporteur of the Executive Committee for her leadership in crafting the Executive Committee conclusion and, on behalf of the Norwegian Omnibus Resolution Facilitation team, expressed hope to approach their own upcoming process with the same spirit of multilateralism and constructive dialogue.

19. The representative of **Hungary**, while commending the coordinated effort to build consensus on the text of the conclusion, recalled that Hungary announced during the first informal preparatory consultations that its delegation did not engage in the negotiations given the number of red lines in the zero draft. She emphasized that the decision of non-engagement was made on the basis of constructive cooperation and support for the work of UNHCR and not with the intention of blocking the process. She said that Budapest was re-examining the content of the finalized text, and Hungary would deliver a statement at the adoption of the conclusion during the Executive Committee meeting in October.

20. The representative of **Ecuador** pointed out that Ecuador was a regional focal point for countries that are hosting, assisting and protecting affected populations and providing basic services to them. Drawing attention to the 2025 budget, which showed a significant decrease in the budget for the Americas region compared to the previous year's budget, said that the decrease could have an impact on successful programmes being implemented by countries like Ecuador. He underscored the financial implications for host countries and called for greater international support on the basis of burden- and responsibility-sharing.

21. Relative to the update on the conclusion, he further recognized that it was important to address the economic impact on host countries to find durable solutions. He reaffirmed that Ecuador would continue in its efforts to host persons under international protection and explained that the possibility of having partnerships with other development organizations was also crucial. Similarly, funding mechanisms from international funding partners would prove essential if affected populations in particularly vulnerable situations were assisted to return home. He stressed that the international community must be willing to shift from an approach that is mainly based on funding from donors to one focusing on durable solutions that involved actors like civil society organizations and the International Development Bank.

22. The representative of **the United States of America** reaffirmed the support for the conclusion and reiterated its commitment to advancing durable solutions and complementary pathways. She called on all to strengthen diplomatic efforts aimed at social and economic inclusion while promoting lawful migration pathways and support for voluntary returns and expanded refugee resettlement. She stressed that those efforts required dedicated resources and a commitment to prioritize durable and other solutions. She pointed out that efforts to rebuild and modernize the United States refugee admissions programme had resulted in the admission of more refugees in that fiscal year compared to the last three decades.

23. On refugee inclusion, she noted that the United States had dedicated resources to support documentation, lawful work, freedom of movement, and access to social safety nets. There was strong evidence that those measures enhance social cohesion, build markets and support entrepreneurship. She noted that a study had shown that refugees in the United States contributed nearly \$124 billion more than they had cost in governmental expenditures. For this reason, the United States believed that close partnership with development and private sector actors was vital. In that regard, the United States was providing funding in support of the World Bank's efforts to support refugees and low and middle-income countries and in support of the UNHCR-International Finance Corporation joint initiative on private sector solutions in forced displacement. She pointed out that the United States had also partnered with the World Economic Forum on the Humanitarian Resilience Investing (HRI) Initiative to catalyse private sector capital into frontier markets. In addition, together with the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) and the Hilton Foundation, the

United States had planned to launch a self-reliance donor group that autumn and looked forward to working with all to prioritize the work.

24. The **Rapporteur of the Executive Committee** reiterated the conclusion's importance and commended the interest and commitment demonstrated by delegates. She urged delegates to replicate the same enthusiasm while writing back to their capitals and during the implementation process. She noted concerns raised by the representative of Hungary and thanked her for the constructive approach she employed during the process.

5. Any other business

25. The **Chairperson of the Standing Committee** raised three issues under the agenda item. First, she noted that summary records of the proceedings of the Standing Committee meeting would be prepared by précis-writers and made available on the Standing Committee web page. A procedure report of the Standing Committee would be prepared by the Secretariat in order to record any decision taken. The procedure report would refer to the summary records with an indication of where they would be available online, in conformity with the procedure established for the annual plenary sessions of the Executive Committee. The procedure report would be circulated electronically by 27 September 2024, allowing one week for the Standing Committee's review. She said that member States may submit amendments related to any factual errors by 4 October 2024. Subsequently, the final version of the report would be circulated electronically and considered adopted as per usual practice. Second, she informed that the documentation and presentations made over the course of the Standing Committee meeting would be made available on the Standing Committee page of UNHCR's public website. Third, she invited the Secretary to the Executive Committee to provide a briefing on plans for the upcoming plenary session of the Executive Committee.

26. The **Secretary of the Executive Committee (UNHCR)** outlined the preparations for the seventy-fifth plenary session of the Executive Committee, which were already underway. The meeting would take place in Room XIX at the Palais des Nations from 14 to 18 October 2024. The session would feature a High-Level Segment on Statelessness in the morning of 14 October to mark the end of the UNHCR #IBelong campaign, take stock of the campaign's achievements and good practices by member States and other stakeholders, and galvanize global momentum as well as renew political commitment to accelerate solutions to statelessness. She said the High-Level segment on statelessness would also mark the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, a multi-stakeholder coalition of States, regional organizations, civil society, United Nations agencies and international organizations, with UNHCR serving as its secretariat. She explained that the Global Alliance was committed to expanding partnerships and collectively securing permanent solutions to end statelessness. She invited delegations, who wished to do so, to consider including references to their achievements in addressing statelessness and expressing support for the Global Alliance in their statements during the general debate, and invited them to consider joining the Global Alliance.

27. She advised that the Security and Safety Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) had moved to a greener and more efficient digital badging solution. In line with that initiative, conference participants at the Executive Committee who did not have a regular UNOG badge would receive a digital badge consisting of their photo, a QR code and the name and date of the conference. Upon completion of the registration form via the Indico tool, and once approved by UNHCR, accredited participants would receive their digital badge by e-mail. She further informed that digital badges could be downloaded to any mobile device or printed to be shown upon entry at the Palais des Nations, noting that Geneva-based participants with valid UNOG badges did not need to register via the Indico tool.

28. She announced that as the session would take place in room XIX, extra seating would be limited. As such, member States would be allocated four seats per delegation (two seats at the table and two seats behind), while observer States and other observers to the meeting would have two seats (one seat at the table and one seat behind). Seating would also follow the General Assembly protocol. In that regard, Yemen, which was selected by the drawing of lots from among United Nations member States to occupy the first seat in the General Assembly for its seventy-ninth session, would occupy the first seat for the Executive Committee's seventy-fifth session. Other Executive Committee members would then follow, after which observer States and other observers would be seated. A seating plan would be posted on the web page of the Executive Committee.

29. To help finalize the list of participants and the organizational arrangements, she requested delegations to confirm their participation in the seventy-fifth plenary session of the Executive Committee by note verbale to the Executive Committee Secretariat by Monday, 16 September 2024. A provisional list of participants would be made available by close of business on Thursday, 10 October 2024. With regard to speaking arrangements, an organizational note outlining the procedures for the list of speakers for the general debate had been posted on the seventy-fifth session web page. The deadline to register for the speakers list was Tuesday, 8 October 2024. The provisional list of speakers for the general debate would be made available by close of business on Thursday, 10 October 2024. More information could be found in the information note on the session web page. She urged delegates to contact the Secretariat of the Executive Committee should they have any questions.

30. With respect to the Nansen Refugee Award, she said UNHCR planned to announce the Global Laureate and Regional winners on Wednesday, 9 October 2024. The ceremony and reception would be held on the evening of Monday, 14 October 2024, after the first day of the seventy-fifth plenary session of the Executive Committee. A save the date message with the formal invitation and registration details would be sent. All delegations were invited to attend the special event. The ceremony and reception would take place at the Fairmont Hotel. She said all were welcome to the venue from 6.15 p.m. onwards and explained that the ceremony would be livestreamed on UNHCR social media channels. She encouraged delegates to contact the Nansen Award team by e-mail (nansen@unhcr.org) should they have any questions.

31. The **Chairperson of the Standing Committee**, after thanking everyone for their contributions and for making the meeting meaningful, declared the ninety-first meeting of the Standing Committee closed.

The meeting adjourned at 3.05 p.m.
