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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Sixtieth session
Geneva, 28 September - 2 October 2009
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Reports on the work of the Standing Committee

Report of the forty-fifth meeting of the Standing Committee (23-25 June 2009)

Report by the Standing Committee*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee, Her Excellency Ambassador Laura Thompson Chacón (Costa Rica), opened the meeting and welcomed Djibouti and the Republic of Moldova as new members, elected by the Economic and Social Council on 18 May 2009.
2. Guatemala, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were admitted as observers in the course of the meeting.
3. The Vice-Chairperson, Her Excellency Ambassador Caroline Millar (Australia), chaired the meeting during agenda items 4(b) environmental issues, 5(a) staff safety and security issues, including refugee security.
4. Before moving to the adoption of the agenda of the meeting, the Chairperson provided an oral report on her recent field mission to Thailand and Malaysia.

* Report adopted by the Standing Committee at its 46th meeting on 15-16 September 2009.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

5. The agenda for the meeting (EC/60/SC/CRP.8/Rev.1) was adopted.

III. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE FORTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

6. The report of the forty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee (EC/60/SC/CRP.7) was adopted, with the addition of two new paragraphs under section III.E.

IV. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

7. In introducing the agenda item, the Assistant High Commissioner-Protection emphasized the Office's responsibility for promoting consistency in overall protection delivery. She highlighted a number of current challenges, in particular the need for: greater investment by States in building effective national asylum systems; strengthening of protection staffing in areas including refugee status determination; age, gender and diversity programming; inter-agency cluster coordination for internally displaced persons (IDPs); resettlement; and protection capacity building; as well as ongoing measures being put in place by UNHCR to embed accountability within its programming practices. The Assistant High Commissioner also commented on a compilation of practices relevant to implementation of the 10-Point Plan of Action across various sectors which served to illustrate efforts by States and other actors to grapple with the complex challenges of mixed migration and asylum flows.

A. The Note on International Protection

8. The Director of the Division of International Protection Services (DIPS) presented the Note on International Protection (EC/60/SC/CRP.9). While illustrating the resilience of the international protection system, this year's Note also underlined the Office's ongoing concerns, notably instances of transgression of core protection standards and the shrinking of humanitarian space. The Director recalled that threats to the safety of humanitarian workers put at stake the viability of UNHCR's programmes, including protection delivery. He also commented on efforts to secure durable solutions for persons of concern and appealed to delegations to support efforts to reach agreement this year on a text for an Executive Committee Conclusion on protracted refugee situations.

9. Delegations welcomed UNHCR's efforts to guide State practice in the area of asylum, including national asylum system capacity building. Harsh detention policies in some countries and forced returns to countries with a record of human rights abuses were denounced, with a number of delegations calling for respect of the 1951 Convention. Many delegations expressed grave concern about the shrinking of humanitarian space and the corresponding impact on the protection environment, calling for efforts to improve access and to safeguard asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement*. The 10-Point Plan of Action was seen as a useful contribution to responding to the challenges of refugee protection in mixed migratory movements. Several delegations were supportive of the establishment of a common European asylum system and a European Union asylum support office to help harmonize asylum practice. A number of

delegations observed that in the area of human trafficking, UNHCR's protection perspective was very valuable, and the Office was encouraged to pursue its collaboration in this respect with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). There were calls for further investigation of the reasons why asylum-seekers often choose to travel great distances, and of the possibilities for protection along the way, with a view to preventing secondary movements leading to trafficking and disproportionate burdens on some States.

10. Delegations noted the encouraging decline in the number of refugees, down by almost 1 million from 2008. At the same time, they observed that the number of new conflict-induced IDP situations was on the rise. While reiterating support for UNHCR's involvement with IDPs as well as its cluster leadership in the area of protection, delegations queried why IDP activities had not been entirely mainstreamed into the Office's budget in 2009, as previously planned. The African Union Convention on internal displacement, expected to be adopted in Kampala in October, was highlighted as an important milestone, and UNHCR's partnership with the AU and others, including States, intergovernmental and international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular, was further encouraged.

11. Regarding operations, concerns were expressed about several current situations, including: the large numbers of people displaced in Pakistan; the overcrowding in the refugee camps in Dadaab, Kenya; the issue of freedom of movement and access to the camps in Sri Lanka; and statistical data presented on the Colombia situation. Delegations continued to call for collaborative efforts to ensure the sustainability of durable solutions for populations of concern. Several delegations cautioned that local integration could not be at the expense of the host community. Others reiterated that self-reliance, while an important part of protecting human rights and achieving a dignified durable solution, was not a solution in itself. Despite the ongoing endeavours to resettle refugees at a time of economic downturn, it was felt that more could be done to increase the number of places and broaden the base of resettlement countries, and there were calls on UNHCR to prioritize critical caseloads on which resettlement countries could focus. The development of emergency transit facilities by UNHCR in collaboration with several States was welcomed.

12. A number of delegations made reference to the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, noting progress achieved with respect to protracted refugee situations and asking for an update on the situation. It was widely agreed that each situation needed its own solution and delegations were broadly supportive of the proposal for an Executive Committee Conclusion on the issue. They also welcomed the upcoming 3rd Dialogue meeting in December on the theme of protection challenges for persons of concern to UNHCR in urban settings, and reiterated previous calls on UNHCR to make available its policy on the subject.

13. In responding to comments, the Assistant High Commissioner picked up on the issue of international burden sharing which she promised to address anew at ExCom, along with the legal and policy implications of new drivers of displacement, which were linked to burden sharing. In response to the position of several delegations regarding IDP situations and the issue of sovereignty of States, while acknowledging the distinction between IDPs and refugees, the Assistant High Commissioner pointed out that the international principles, brought together under the Guiding Principles, although not law, were internationally binding. She also addressed

specific comments made on particular country situations, and in a number of cases, recalled the importance of the support and solidarity of the international community to help UNHCR and the Governments concerned achieve their humanitarian goals.

14. The Director of DIPS confirmed that UNHCR's policy on urban refugees was being finalized. He explained that a number of factors had prevented the mainstreaming of the supplementary appeals under the protection cluster in 2009, and reassured delegations that this would be resolved in the 2010-2011 budget. In relation to the concerns about the overcrowding of camps in Dadaab, he indicated that land had been identified and that UNHCR would move ahead as soon as it received the green light from the Government. With regard to the situation in Sri Lanka, UNHCR was working with the Government on issues of freedom of movement, return and reunification.

B. Progress Report on Statelessness in 2009

15. The Director of DIPS introduced document EC/60/SC/CRP.10. He recalled the importance of the adoption in 2006 of ExCom Conclusion No. 106 (LVII) on identification, prevention and reduction of statelessness and protection of stateless persons, and highlighted subsequent progress made in areas such as: the establishment of clearer data on the prevalence of statelessness; registration of minority communities facing risks of statelessness; acquisition of citizenship; legal reforms to prevent statelessness; and advocacy and awareness-raising measures. Outstanding challenges included resource constraints which had prevented broader operational involvement in statelessness situations; and limited awareness and political will on the part of some States to address the problem of statelessness and open or expand space for humanitarian action on this issue.

16. Delegations taking the floor commended UNHCR's work to date on statelessness issues and encouraged the Office to pursue its efforts to raise awareness and find solutions for stateless people and to report more regularly on outstanding challenges to the Committee. There were a number of calls for States themselves to be more engaged, by acceding to the Statelessness Conventions for those who had not yet done so, and to use every opportunity to resolve the problem of statelessness. Several delegations reported on measures taken by their respective Governments in this respect, such as the inclusion of the issue of statelessness in human rights reporting and the alignment of national legislation on citizenship with the 1961 Convention.

17. One delegation called on UNHCR to expand its partnerships in regional fora such as the Inter-governmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies, the Bali Process and the Organization of American States. Another advocated greater emphasis on training staff and developing national capacities on statelessness. Conscious of the modest resources available, several delegations encouraged the Office to articulate its needs to garner donor support under the new budget structure and to reinforce the capacity of the Statelessness Unit.

18. Following the interventions, the Assistant High Commissioner-Protection expressed concern about the general lack of awareness across the world of the nature and extent of the problem of statelessness, which affected some 12 million people. She proposed that the Committee consider convening in another forum to pursue discussions on statelessness.

19. The Director of DIPS welcomed suggestions from delegations to reinforce the Office's capacity and clarified that the amount budgeted under Pillar 2 of the new budget structure would be based on operational needs identified under the global needs analysis, covering those stateless situations for which data had been gathered. The Head of the Statelessness Unit described areas where efforts were currently being focused, including the setting up of an analytical framework and a Handbook for Parliamentarians, which was being developed in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). He made reference to growing partnership initiatives on the issue of statelessness with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and expressed particular appreciation for NGO support provided through awareness raising and operational collaboration.

C. Update on implementation of the Agenda for Protection

20. The Director of DIPS provided a brief update on implementation of the Agenda for Protection, as outlined in document EC/60/SC/INF.1. He recalled the move to undertake a field-based consultation amongst States in 2008: the interim report provided in October 2008, based on responses from 42 countries, had revealed continuing strong commitment to the goals of the Agenda, and indicated the need to focus more attention on issues of internal displacement and the asylum-migration mix. Since then only four more responses from States had been received, however the Director valued the dialogue that the consultations had generated, and welcomed any further suggestions from delegations.

21. Delegations expressed strong support for pursuing the exercise which was seen as a useful benchmarking tool to show what refugee protection really required of a State and to highlight achievements and remaining areas requiring attention. There were a number of calls for UNHCR to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the data received in order to identify outstanding gaps and challenges.

V. PROGRAMME/PROTECTION POLICY

A. Report on international protection of women and girls in displacement

22. The Director of DIPS presented conference room paper EC/60/SC/CRP.11 and emphasized that in order to protect women and girls and address gender inequality, delivery needed to be improved in three areas: education, participation and livelihoods.

23. Several delegations commended UNHCR for its implementation of the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming (AGDM) strategy. There were queries about the linkages and integration of AGDM in the results-based management system and calls for more disaggregated data, demographic analyses, and involvement of men and boys in SGBV prevention and response efforts. Accountability should apply throughout the organization, up to the highest management level.

24. A number of delegations commended the Office's achievements with regard to the empowerment of women and girls; however, there was a long way to go to realize all goals, notably in the areas of education and women's participation in camp committees. There was serious concern regarding the lack of provision of sanitary materials which, it was recalled, was one of the High Commissioner's Five Commitments to refugee women, and had broad implications for the dignity of girls and women, including the risk of affecting the retention of girls in school. Delegations requested a report on progress in implementing commitments to women as well as to children and how this would be included in the budget for the next biennium.

25. The Women Leading for Livelihoods initiative was commended and delegations called on the Office to pursue these projects. Several delegations expressed hope that the *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls at Risk* would be widely utilized, and encouraged the Office to highlight the special needs of women and girls with disabilities.

26. The Director recalled that, with the introduction of the accountability framework and the *Focus* software, it would henceforth be possible to gather indicators related to SGBV and empowerment. He acknowledged that data gathered from communities should be operationalized and implemented, including in budgetary allocations, and, with regard to sanitary materials, a policy on ensuring sustainability of supplies would have to be considered. The Director expressed the hope that delegations would support consideration of a future ExCom Conclusion on disabilities. Implementation of standard operating procedures on SGBV had been reported on quite consistently for camp settings (83% in 2008); however with almost 100 urban locations it was more difficult to gather information on the latter.

27. The Assistant High Commissioner-Protection expressed her appreciation for the Committee's support and confirmed that UNHCR's senior management was very engaged in prioritizing gender-related protection issues and in taking the lead on accountability. In closing, she called on delegations to help identify people in civil society with influence and the capacity to further support the Women Leading for Livelihoods initiative.

B. Environmental issues

28. The Director of the Division of Operational Services (DOS) introduced document EC/60/SC/CRP.12 on environmental issues, recalling the pressing need to address the question of environmental protection within the framework of humanitarian assistance. He commented on the Office's keen awareness of the importance of environmentally friendly operational practices and community-based approaches for its interventions, and warned of the negative consequences of interruptions in environment-related activities if funding support was not made available.

29. Thirteen delegations took the floor, reflecting keen interest amongst members in the challenges faced in dealing with environmental issues in situations of displacement. They welcomed the efforts being made by UNHCR and its partners to mainstream environmental considerations into protection work. Many encouraged an extension of collaboration, pointing out that while recognizing the need for the Office to play a leading role in advocacy and

awareness raising, it was important to avoid duplication of effort and that development and implementation of environmental activities should be undertaken by partners. A delegation also called for earlier involvement of development actors.

30. One delegation drew attention to UNHCR's strategy of tailoring projects to each situation and encouraging community-based programmes, which was considered essential. Others advised the Office to ensure engagement in support of national disaster reduction strategies. Concern was also expressed at the current lack of resources and internal expertise to analyse needs and put in place strategies, tools and guidelines.

31. The Director of DOS reassured the Committee that UNHCR had no intention of taking charge of the implementation of response to environmental concerns, and saw its role as that of a catalyst working with hosting communities and governments to reduce the impact of refugee presence in camp situations. This nevertheless required expertise and knowledge in order to introduce preventive measures and assess how national structures, other agencies and NGO partners can be engaged in implementation.

32. The Deputy Director commented on some of the Office's key partnerships in relation to disaster risk reduction strategies in anticipation of adverse effects of climate change. Citing examples of efforts undertaken in countries such as Kenya and Mozambique to reduce the impact of severe weather on persons of concern, he underlined that this approach was designed to benefit not only refugee, IDP and returnee populations but also the local hosting communities who were equally vulnerable.

33. Following discussion and amendment of the draft text, a decision on addressing environmental issues in operations for persons of concern to UNHCR was adopted (see Annex I).

VI. REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

A. Staff safety and security issues, including refugee security

34. The Director of DOS presented conference room paper EC/60/SC/CRP.13, drawing particular attention to the dramatic increase in the number of security incidents against humanitarian workers, up by more than 350 per cent in the past three years. Steps being taken to respond to this challenge included risk mitigation strategies and training, many issues related to humanitarian space had yet to be addressed, and he foresaw the need to be prepared to meet the rising cost of security measures while finding new and innovative ways of operating.

35. Delegations extended condolences to UNHCR for the loss of another staff member in Pakistan, who had been killed a few weeks prior to the meeting. Tribute was also paid to staff worldwide for the work they carried out under difficult conditions with serious threats to their lives. The Office's response to staff safety and security was broadly welcomed, as was the shift from a "when to leave" to a "how to stay" approach. The move from fixed security levels to security management based on local risk assessments was also deemed positive, in line with comments about the importance of balancing security measures with the needs of beneficiaries.

36. A number of delegations supported the Office's investment in staff training. UNHCR was asked to clarify the proposal for a centralized fund for security and the criteria used for risk evaluation. There were numerous calls for greater emphasis on reporting on security for beneficiaries, and a suggestion to examine the issue separately from that of staff safety. Finally, a number of countries indicated their readiness to offer, on a case-by-case basis, places for resettlement for local staff at risk.

37. The Director urged States to help communicate the message that humanitarian workers were neutral parties and to support mechanisms to ensure the safety and security of staff. He acknowledged that greater reference to the matter of refugee security could be made; nevertheless, he wished to avoid giving the impression that the two were separate issues.

38. The Chief of the Field Safety Section commented on the central funding mechanism. The current cost-share arrangement for the UN Department of Safety and Security placed a heavy burden on organizations like UNHCR, at both central and local levels. UNHCR believed that additional support ought to be made available through the United Nations Regular Budget to equip staff working in the Field with adequate security resources. Progress on improving the security management system had been achieved through inter-agency fora, however more training was needed to equip field managers to be able to conduct security risk assessments. Ongoing improvements to the database system would allow UNHCR to better analyse trends and adjust procedures and protocols.

B. Global Needs Assessment

39. The Deputy High Commissioner and the Director of the Office for Organizational Development Management (ODM) introduced document EC/60/SC/CRP.14 on the global needs assessment (GNA), pointing to the progress made in shifting from a resource-based approach to one based on a realistic assessment of needs.

40. A number of delegations underlined the importance of consulting and collaborating with other agencies undertaking similar needs assessment exercises, to ensure coherence and complementarity, and reduce duplication. Some also stressed the need to involve implementing partners and governments in the assessment and planning phases. It was suggested that UNHCR liaise with non-traditional partners to explore needs that lie outside traditional mandate areas. One delegation emphasized the importance of field input throughout the process.

41. With regard to resource allocation and prioritization criteria, several delegations requested clarification, including on how the Office intended to manage expectations internally and externally, particularly in relation to the likelihood of financial limitations preventing full funding of the GNA in the current economic environment. There were also queries on how UNHCR would monitor field plans to ensure sufficient flexibility to incorporate needs during the year and avoid mid-year budgetary capping.

42. The Director confirmed that ensuring coherence and complementarity amongst different organizations' needs assessment initiatives was indeed part of the GNA policy. Ongoing consultations between UNHCR, partners, and governments during the assessment and planning

process would continue to take into consideration feedback from the Field and would include discussions on the various assessment methodologies being developed by other agencies. The Director explained the prioritization process and the Global Strategic Priorities that had been established. He confirmed that planning and budgeting incorporated activities targeting all persons of concern (including IDPs), on the basis of needs and vulnerabilities, and agreed on the importance of managing expectations both outside and within the house.

43. The establishment of a small monitoring unit would enable UNHCR to analyse the impact of GNA planning, as well as to monitor the planning, budgeting and annual operational review process. The GNA methodology aimed to capture budgetary requirements that were traditionally expressed as supplementary budgets, however the Director acknowledged that in view of the nature of UNHCR's work, unpredictable situations could emerge during the planning period, in which case supplementary budgets would become necessary.

VII. MANAGEMENT, FINANCIAL CONTROL, ADMINISTRATIVE OVERSIGHT AND HUMAN RESOURCES

44. The Deputy High Commissioner, Controller, Director of the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM), and Director of ODM participated in the discussions on management, financial control, administrative oversight and human resources.

A. UNHCR's structural and management change process

45. The Deputy High Commissioner provided an overview of the impact of various initiatives undertaken through the structural and management change process including the Results Framework, *Focus*, GNA, the Global Management Accountability Framework, and Global Strategic Priorities (GSPs). He also spoke about the Headquarters and Field review, and the decentralization and regionalization process. Finally, he addressed human resources management issues including the global staff survey, the establishment of the Ethics Office, the new performance management and appraisal system, and the revised policy on staff rotation.

46. Several delegations called for an update on the status of UNHCR's Global Strategic Objectives. It was suggested that the Office should be more ambitious in setting objectives and targets and pursue a more realistic and balanced approach, such as tiered objectives that would take into account fluctuations in funding. UNHCR was encouraged to continue its efforts to strengthen partnerships worldwide, and to help partners understand the impact of the organization's structural and management reform process on their way of working.

47. In relation to human resources issues, the Committee asked for more information on the additional workforce strategy and on plans to consolidate the current roster system. One delegation expressed particular concern with regard to the organization's current policy on rotation, which would require UNHCR staff to take special leave without pay after turning down field assignments two or three times.

48. In light of positive feedback on the matrix of outputs and impact used to report to the Committee on progress achieved since March 2009, the Director of ODM confirmed that the Office would continue to use this format for future reporting. He also reassured the Committee that UNHCR's partners had been closely involved in the field review component of the change process and would continue to be engaged in the design and implementation of all new initiatives.

49. On the human resource management questions, it was explained that the management of additional workforce arrangements, currently spread across different departments and units, would be brought together under the umbrella of the Division of Human Resources Management (DHRM). The new Division of Emergency and Supply Management would however, manage rosters for rapid and temporary deployments for humanitarian crises. The Director of DHRM confirmed that UNHCR was tightening its policy on rotation, which would affect staff holding indefinite appointments in this respect. In response to another query, he also announced that the organization had put measures in place to ensure geographic diversity in recruitment.

B. Update on the introduction of International Public Sector
Accounting Standards (IPSAS)

50. The Controller provided a briefing on current developments for UNHCR to become IPSAS-compliant (EC/60/SC/CRP.15).

51. Several delegations urged the Office to redouble its efforts to meet the forthcoming deadline for compliance. There were also requests for UNHCR to create an independent Audit Service, to complement the internal and external audit functions and to advise Member States and the High Commissioner on measures taken and those required for UNHCR to meet international audit standards. It was suggested that, with decentralization and regionalization, the oversight role of Headquarters needed to be reinforced.

52. The Controller welcomed member States' interest in strengthening UNHCR's oversight capacity and encouraged delegations to engage in bilateral discussions with Office on these issues. She explained that the IPSAS certification was gradual, not involving a specific deadline, and would require UNHCR to revise its financial rules and procedures. IPSAS had meanwhile provided an excellent platform for collaboration within the United Nations system. Sister agencies were meeting regularly to discuss best practices and challenges, and the World Food Programme, which was already IPSAS-compliant, was expected to send a team to Geneva to train other agencies and to share experiences and lessons learned.

53. In relation to the suggestions on creating a complementary audit function, the Deputy High Commissioner described UNHCR's vision for an evaluation service, which would be born out of the current ODM Office. Where ODM would ultimately be housed would depend on the outcome of the restructuring of DIPS and DOS. The work of the evaluation service, which would have a strong emphasis on programme monitoring and evaluation and would help ensure that operations were aligned with UNHCR's global and regional policies, would be facilitated by *Focus*.

C. Progress report on funding end-of-service and post-retirement benefits

54. The Controller presented document EC/60/SC/CRP.16, illustrating key points with a slide presentation on funding end-of-service and post-retirement benefits. Making reference to the situation of other United Nations organizations, she updated the Committee on UNHCR's liabilities, which currently amounted to US\$ 369 million, and set out the Office's proposed strategies for funding the different areas concerned, i.e. medical insurance coverage plans; repatriation benefits; and accrued annual leave. UNHCR's position on this would be dependent on the strategy to be adopted by the United Nations, and the Controller anticipated submitting a funding proposal to the Standing Committee for decision in June 2010.

VIII. PROGRAMME BUDGETS AND FUNDING

55. The Deputy High Commissioner, the Controller, the Head of the Budget Service and the Director a.i. of the Division of External Relations (DER) were present for the discussion on programme budgets and funding.

A. Global report on activities in 2008

56. The Director a.i. of DER, presented UNHCR's Global Report 2008, drawing attention to key policy areas, including reform initiatives, and to particular challenges, such as preserving humanitarian space.

57. A number of delegations expressed appreciation for the quality of the information contained in the Global Report. Several questions were raised regarding statistics contained in the Report, including:

- why there were differences in these figures as opposed to those contained in the 2008 Global Trends document;
- why there was such an exponential increase in the number of stateless persons reported;
- how UNHCR had determined that half the world's refugee population was living in urban settings; and
- how the Office planned to adjust its service delivery as a result of the latter development.

58. It was suggested that UNHCR should clarify its statistics, and that gender and age-disaggregated data be included in future reporting. Finally, concerns were raised regarding the revelation in the report that 45 per cent of resettlement staff had been funded externally in 2007 and 2008, and why sufficient funds had not been allocated within the annual budget to support this core activity.

59. The Director explained that the differences in figures used in UNHCR's different reporting channels were sometimes due to them being updated at different times. Regarding the figure for stateless persons, he reiterated information shared under the earlier discussions on international protection, i.e. that the spike in numbers had been due to an expansion in UNHCR's coverage and knowledge of stateless populations. The assessment of the extent of the refugee population of concern to UNHCR now living in urban settings had been determined in part by

the large numbers of Iraqis in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and the issue would be further explored in the months to come. He shared the concern expressed relating to funding for resettlement staff, but reminded the Committee that this would be included in UNHCR's core budget in 2010.

B. Update on programme budgets and funding in 2008 and 2009

60. In presenting conference room paper EC/60/SC/CRP.17, the Controller confirmed that donor confidence and support towards UNHCR's programmes had been sustained, resulting in an adequate Annual Programme Budget carry-over into 2009, which had facilitated the early funding of programme activities and priorities. In 2009, in light of the continuing volatility of global economic and financial markets, resulting in significant exchange rate fluctuations, the Office's financial situation was being closely monitored to ensure the implementation of planned programmes and avoid curtailing essential services and activities.

61. The Director a.i. of DER provided an overview of the current funding situation for 2009. Contributions received to date for 2009 were the highest ever received midway through the year, and the Director expressed deep appreciation for ExCom's commitment, financial support and host country contributions to the work of the Office. However, with a budget set at the highest level ever, in order to fully meet current needs and respond to new emergencies, such as Sri Lanka and Pakistan, UNHCR would still have to mobilize additional financial resources within an increasingly competitive and difficult funding environment.

62. Reiterating UNHCR's appreciation, the Deputy High Commissioner took the opportunity to review some of the results of UNHCR's structural and management reform process, which had led to savings and increased efficiency in delivering the programmes donors were supporting, including a greater percentage of resources spent in the Field. He presented slides to show decreasing trends in staff, administrative and headquarters costs in relation to total expenditures. Concerning the outposting of certain functions from Geneva to Budapest, the Deputy High Commissioner confirmed that UNHCR was still on track to realize the originally estimated savings.

63. Several delegations expressed concern about the projected funding shortfall for the Annual Programme in 2009 and the impact of this on projects, with calls for donors to respond positively to the need for additional resources. UNHCR's efforts to expand its donor base and take a more measured pace in the use of its operational reserve, were also welcomed. There were a number of queries regarding the effect on operations of currency gains and losses in 2009. UNHCR was also urged to continue to report on accomplishments and the impact of its programmes on beneficiaries, as this was an important tool for donors in terms of garnering support from their respective governments.

64. The Director a.i. of DER noted delegations' concerns about funding in 2009. He assured the Committee that UNHCR was making every effort to raise the level of contributions to avoid a shortfall and reiterated that UNHCR was continuing to work on expanding its funding base including through mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and private sector fund raising. He emphasized that UNHCR was being more judicious in the use of

the operational reserve. In closing, he took the opportunity to stress the importance of flexible contributions, and once again thanked Executive Committee members for their continued support.

65. In response to questions on exchange rate gains and losses and on the mechanisms in place for dealing with such fluctuations, the Controller provided a detailed explanation of the complexity of the issue, noting that, on the income side, UNHCR had incurred losses in 2009, which had been partially offset by gains on the expenditure side.

66. At the close of the item, the Committee adopted a Decision on Overall Programme Budgets and Funding for 2009 (see Annex II).

IX. COORDINATION

67. The Director a.i. of DER presented an outline of UNHCR's forthcoming oral update to the 2009 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which would cover three themes: 1) coordination within the United Nations system and Inter-Agency Standing Committee; 2) bilateral collaboration with United Nations and other international organizations; and 3) coordination with non-governmental organizations.

X. GOVERNANCE

68. A number of suggestions were made with regard to possible topics for inclusion in the High Commissioner's opening statement at the 60th session of the Executive Committee. These would be conveyed to the High Commissioner for his consideration.

XI. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

69. The Chairperson thanked delegations for respecting the time limitations set for interventions and proposed that for ExCom plenary session statements, the same timing be applied, i.e. five minutes per intervention (extended to seven minutes for interventions on behalf of a group). She requested delegations to refrain from raising issues which were not directly related to the work and particular mandate of the Standing Committee. There being no further business, the Chairperson closed the meeting.

Annex I

DECISION ON ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
IN OPERATIONS FOR PERSONS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR

The Standing Committee,

Recognizing the impact of environmental issues on the relationship between refugees and hosts,

Appreciating the measures already undertaken by UNHCR to mainstream environmental considerations into its programmes,

Keenly aware of the risk that climate change and environmental degradation will exacerbate the challenges of protecting and assisting vulnerable populations of concern to UNHCR across the globe,

Recognizing also the importance of adaptation at country level, and the need for enhanced burden sharing in this regard,

- (a) *Notes* the usefulness of the environmental policy and guidelines produced by UNHCR in 1997 and revised in 2005, and *urges* consistency in their application at the country level and their further dissemination;
- (b) *Welcomes* UNHCR's continued efforts to develop and promote sustainable responses to environmental concerns in refugee, IDP and returnee operations, through the integration of environmental principles into its management and training tools;
- (c) *Encourages* UNHCR to further strengthen its collaboration with other agencies concerned with environmental management, particularly in the context of cluster arrangements, Delivering as One and other UN coordination mechanisms, notably in promoting sustainable environmental conservation and rehabilitation;
- (d) *Encourages* affected States to make adequate provision for the needs of refugee, IDP and returnee hosting areas in their National Action Plans for Adaptation (NAPAs) and to implement such provisions with the support of UNHCR and other relevant partners;
- (e) *Further encourages* UNHCR, together with relevant partners, to extend the scope of its assessment and monitoring of environmental activities and to develop strategies for disaster risk reduction in refugee and IDP hosting and returnee areas;
- (f) *Calls on* UNHCR to allocate adequate resources for addressing environmental issues identified through its comprehensive needs assessment, after due consideration of core priorities for the needs of persons of concern;
- (g) *Notes* the usefulness of fully engaging and supporting the local expertise to find effective mitigation measures to environmental degradation in refugee and IDP hosting areas, as well as in returnee areas.

Annex II

DECISION ON OVERALL PROGRAMME BUDGETS
AND FUNDING FOR 2009

The Standing Committee,

Recalling the Executive Committee's decision at its fifty-ninth session on administrative, financial and programme matters [A/AC.96/1063, para. 16 (d)] as well as its discussions under the programme budgets and funding item at the forty-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee,

Reaffirming the importance of international burden and responsibility-sharing in reducing the burden on countries hosting refugees, especially developing ones,

- (a) *Notes* that UNHCR's needs under its Annual Programme Budget for 2009, based on currently known requirements, amount to \$1,275.5 million, as approved by the Executive Committee at its fifty-ninth session;
- (b) *Notes* that the 2009 Supplementary Programme Budgets currently amount to \$840.9 million, including \$199.6 million for programmes benefiting internally displaced persons (IDPs);
- (c) *Recognizes* that emergencies and unforeseen activities unfolding in 2009 may result in the need for additional or expanded Supplementary Programmes and that additional resources, over and above those for existing budgets, would be needed to meet such needs;
- (d) *Notes with continuing concern* that projected income for the year 2009 reveals a possible shortfall of \$116.4 million under the Annual Programme Budget; and
- (e) *Urges* Member States, in the light of the extensive needs to be addressed by the Office of the High Commissioner, to continue to respond generously and in a spirit of solidarity, and in a timely manner, to his appeal for resources to meet in full the approved 2009 Annual Programme Budget, as well as the requirements of the 2009 Supplementary Programme Budgets.

Annex III

LIST OF POINTS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTION

1. Update and make available UNHCR's policy on urban refugees.
 2. Undertake a comprehensive analysis of responses by States to the review on implementation of the Agenda for Protection.
 3. Provide a report on progress in implementing commitments to refugee women and refugee children and how this is to be reflected in the 2010-2011 budget.
 4. Provide a matrix on the roles and responsibilities of the different audit, evaluation and oversight functions in UNHCR.
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